

12. The Last Chapter



Over twenty-two years a widow, Jo managed to live alone in her own home very well in most respects until she reached the age of 91. Even then she was doing remarkably well as a breast cancer survivor until the day in September 1997 when she fell and broke her kneecap and her shoulder. From then on it was mostly downhill until May 25, 2000, when she quietly passed away at home. The precipitating event was noted in E.C.'s journal:

October 10, 1997

It's been almost a month now since Nanny fell and broke her shoulder and her knee. And she is still virtually helpless. She is, however, improving. But it's been a very trying time.

On September 13, a Saturday afternoon, she went out to get the mail, but coming inside she tripped on the rug beside the front door and fell. She dragged herself a little way into the hall but couldn't make it to the phone. About 20 or 30 minutes later Edna came by and found her on the floor. Edna called me at the Family History Center library and I came immediately. She wouldn't let Edna call 911 but as soon as I saw that she was indeed injured, I called 911. Paramedics came immediately and after an ordeal,

got her loaded and we drove to the hospital emergency room. Because it was a busy afternoon and evening, she had to be placed in the hall, awaiting x-rays. They showed that the right shoulder was cracked, and that the right knee was crushed. She was then put into a room to await surgery which took place the next morning, Sunday. Fred Hensal was the orthopedic surgeon, someone I trust and have had experience with. He did my tibia repairs after my 1990 hiking accident.

She did very well during surgery to repair the knee. The shoulder was only cracked, so needed only a sling for her arm. She is bruised badly all up and down her right side. The anesthetic and the pain killers made her very confused mentally. She hallucinated badly, almost frighteningly for several days, until we asked that she be given Tylenol for pain rather than the narcotics. I guess every medicine reacts differently in a 91 year old patient. After 5 days in the hospital she was moved to the Retirement Ranch nursing center for rehabilitation. She has now been there for three weeks.

The last two and a half years of her life were not fun for her. She had never been disabled in any way in her 90-plus years and this trouble came with a high cost in her personal freedom, her sense of independence and her social relations, which became severely curtailed.

She spent the first week or so in the hospital recovering from the surgery which repaired her knee and shoulder. Following that she resided at the Retirement Ranch of Clovis, adjacent to the hospital where she received physical therapy for 90 days in an effort to restore her mobility and capabilities. That was only partially successful. She was never again able to dress, bathe or groom herself entirely alone. When she was able to move back to her own beloved home, she required round-the-clock care.

She started a draft for a Thanksgiving letter in 1999:

Dear family and friends,

First and most important I want to thank all of you for your cards, food and all the kind things you remembered me with. About a year ago I had an unfortunate fall which left me incapacitated, unable to walk or do much. I have three girls who help me and I am gradually getting back to me. The grandkids are fine and doing well.



There were a number of different caregivers, some of whom were recommended by Willie May Harding, who specialized in providing recommendations for employers and employees in the healthcare field. She did this free of charge. Willie May spent many hours on the phone every day helping people find someone to care for their loved one or to help those seeking work to find a position. She said of Jo: “Mrs. Shaeffer left beautiful memories for us to enjoy. I tried to give her the best care givers, as she deserved the best!”

Above: Edna Pollard, Clovis News Journal photo

Edna Pollard was among the most faithful as she spent nights with Jo throughout her last years. Edna had previously helped out once a week, but after Jo's fall, she was able to give assistance as needed. Although she missed her privacy, Jo dearly loved the girls that helped her and were so devoted to her.



Mary Jo Jones with Jo



Dorothy Bilberry

Although Joanie Saiz was her first day-time helper, Mary Jo Jones and Dorothy Bilberry were her favorites, and stayed with her to the end. Substitutes were necessary from time to time and came from Home Health Care of Clovis. Some were more satisfactory than others. Nevertheless, her most faithful companion, Patch, was with her always.

Right: Patch's favorite place to be—in Nanny's lap!



Hospice services were excellent and extremely helpful through to the end—May 25, 2000, when Jo passed away quietly at home.

Long before she was debilitated by illness and broken bones, Jo wrote this: “When death comes I hope I can accept it with a sense of dignity and quiet conscience. I do not want to eke out extra days and have them prolonged which serve no purpose that I can respect.” At least part of that came true for her.

She had saved a poem written by her friend, Ann Murphy. It epitomized her feelings about her own demise:

I'd like the memory of me
 To be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow
 Of smiles when life is done.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve
 To dry before the sun
Of happy memories that I leave
 When my life is done.

Jo's funeral service had been planned a year earlier. One day she started talking about funerals and asked Ellen Claire if she would jot down some suggestions which included: Scott King to speak but NOT to give a sermon, Donald Pashke to sing the “Lord's Prayer” and “Ave Maria.” Pallbearers were to be her 4 grandsons, Bob Martin and Hershel Wall. Grave dedication was to be done by Will Irwin. All this was followed closely and included eulogies by John Duncan Shaeffer and Ellen Claire Shaeffer.



Jo Shaeffer

July 7, 1906

May 25, 2000

As beautiful at 93 as she was at 39



(from the funeral program)

In Loving Memory of
Jo Shaeffer
Age 93

Date of Birth
July 7, 1906
Denver, Colorado

Date of Death
May 25, 2000
Clovis, New Mexico

Services
May 27, 2000 - 3:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church
Clovis, New Mexico

Officiating
N. Scott King
Rev. Lance Clemmons

Burial
Tuesday, May 30, 2000 - 9:00 a.m.
Crown Hill Memorial Cemetery
Denver, Colorado

Pallbearers

Martin Shaeffer, III	William Prior Irwin, III
J. Duncan Shaeffer	Bob Martin
Dan Shaeffer	Hershel Wall

The family of Jo Shaeffer gratefully
acknowledges your presence.



Muffley Funeral Home, Inc.
Clovis, New Mexico

Clovis News Journal

Friday, May, 26, 2000

JO SHAEFFER

Helen Jo Shaeffer, 93, of Clovis, a retired educator, died Thursday, May 25, 2000, at her home.

She was born July 7, 1906, in Denver to Dallas J. and Pearl Miller Osborne.

She married Earl Martin Shaeffer Jan. 1, 1925, in Denver. After her children were grown, she attended Mesa College in Grand Junction, Colo., receiving her bachelor's



Shaeffer

degree from Colorado State University at Greeley in 1954. She earned her master's degree in education at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1960.

Shaeffer's experience included teaching elementary grades and administration, and she was a principal in several schools in Grand Junction. She pioneered the ungraded primary block (grades 1-3) throughout Colorado and Utah. She was also an associate professor at California State University, Fresno, from 1969-1975. She was an associate professor at Western State College in Gunnison, Colo., 1968-1969.

She conducted workshops and was a guest speaker on reading methods in California, Oregon, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Utah and Colorado.

Shaeffer's professional recognition includes the 1968-1969 and 1969-1970 International Who's Who of American Women, the

1968 Personalities of the West and Midwest and the 1966 recipient of Outstanding Alumni Award, Colorado State University, Greeley.

She was an advocate for literacy and received acclaim for her entertaining book reviews by various groups, clubs and organizations. She was a member of the Crippled Children board of directors, the Cerebral Palsy board of directors, the Goodwill board, the Child Welfare board, and she was past president of the Federated Women's Club.

In 1973, she and her husband made their home in Clovis, where she did volunteer literacy tutoring at Cannon Air Force Base. She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church and was ordained a ruling elder in 1984. She was also a member of Chapter G of PEO.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Earl Martin Shaeffer.

Survivors include one son, E. Martin Shaeffer Jr. of Clovis; one daughter, Bobbie Jo Irwin of Houston; seven grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday at First Presbyterian Church in Clovis. The Rev. N. Scott King and the Rev. Lance Clemmons will officiate.

Burial will be at 9 a.m. Tuesday at Crown Hill Cemetery in Denver.

Pallbearers will be Martin Shaeffer III, J. Duncan Shaeffer, Dan Shaeffer, William Prior Irwin III, Bob Martin and Hershel Wall.

Memorials may be made to PEO Educational Loan Fund.

Arrangements are by Muffley Funeral Home.

EULOGY - E. C. Shaeffer

It seems to me that when one gives a eulogy it helps to be able to have a pretty good perspective of the individual one is eulogizing. But when you've been so close for so long, like Mom and I have been, it is very difficult to see the forest for the trees. I think I need to take a step back in space or time to see it all as well as I would like to. It was over a year ago that Mom planned her funeral and asked me to do the eulogy, but I didn't want to think about it. Since Thursday I have made the following reflections:

Helen Josephine Osborne was born in Denver, Colorado, the 7th of July 1906 to Dallas Jonathan and Mary Pearl Oak Miller Osborne. She was the third of the Osborne's four children, one boy and three girls. The Osbornes had come west from Ohio for Jonathan's health. He had TB. With their daughter, Alberta, the family first went to Las Vegas, New Mexico where their son Dallas was born. They then went to Denver where Jo and her younger sister, Bobbie, were born. When Jo was just six years old, Jonathan died, leaving his wife and four young children. His widow never remarried.

Jo remembered her grandparents moving to Denver and living close enough to be of assistance to Pearl and the children. Jo had many fond recollections of happy times spent with her grandmother Miller. Quoting a conversation we taped a couple of years ago: "[Grandmother] loved the other kids, but she made me feel like I was her favorite. I adored my grandmother who was always so sweet. I can still see the wig she always wore, which I admired."

Jo attended North Denver High School where she graduated in 1924. On January 1st, 1925 she married Earl Martin Shaeffer. They had met at a dance where Earl was a member of the band. The newlyweds made their home in Grand Junction, Colorado, where their two children, Bobbie Jo and Marty were born.

During the summers when the children were young they would often accompany Earl, a lineman for the telephone company, on his trips away from home, especially if he were working in the mountains. The family would camp and fish and enjoy the outdoors. They camped at Glenwood Springs, at Silverton and at Aspen, which was Mom's favorite spot. One night when they were camped at Aspen, she awoke to find a porcupine on the woodpile next to her cot and it was staring her in the face. She screamed and woke the family. Marty got a stick and sent it scampering out of the tent. Only after they were all safe could she laugh about it.

In 1943 they moved to Cripple Creek, Colorado, where Jo cooked on a coal stove and filled in as occasion demanded for the telephone exchange operator. Her free time was always spent reading books. But she was a disciplined reader. She never read a book unless her work was finished, and she used her reading time as a reward for completing her many chores. And there were MANY chores in the Cripple Creek household, which had few conveniences. Water for dishes, laundry and bathing had to be heated on a coal stove, and clothes were washed on a scrub board in a wash tub.

Moving back to Grand Junction in 1946 the Shaeffers built their first house which included a number of modern conveniences. Jo became active in a number of service and social organizations and was frequently in demand to give book reviews. She became well known throughout the area for her mesmerizing reviews and was often booked up months in advance.

In 1951, when her younger child started college, she did, too. She began at Mesa Community College in Grand Junction and worked her way through to her masters degree with outstanding scholarship. She began her teaching career as soon as she was certified. She was in the classroom in some capacity for almost twenty years, beginning

with teaching first grade and ending with teaching college students. As an advocate for literacy, she was an expert in the teaching of reading.

During her teaching career she became very interested in the non-graded primary, in which the first three grades were divided into multiple learning layers, allowing children to progress as fast as they were able. She experimented with the concept and it became very successful in Grand Junction. Soon she found that her services were in demand to un-grade the primary grades in other schools as well, and she began traveling all over the state, and beyond in this endeavor.

She was principal of three schools in the Grand Junction School district, and in this role she came to the attention of the University of California. She was offered a position with California State University in Fresno, where she truly enjoyed her experiences in the college classrooms there.

A teacher's influence has no boundaries. You never know how widely the ripples will be felt. After Mom was retired she received a call one day from a neurosurgeon from Seattle. "Are you the Jo Shaeffer that taught school at Pear Park?" he asked. When she said she was, indeed, he then explained that he wanted express his appreciation for her inspiration in his young life. She had taught him to read after his early teachers as well as his own mother had given up on him, saying that he would never learn to read. Mom refused to accept that assessment and gave him just the push he needed to get his educational ball rolling.

I recall that in 1995 she got a phone call from a former student that had taken some of her college classes. The caller said that she, herself, was now teaching college students. She said to Jo, "Not a single day goes by that I do not use the knowledge, skills and approaches you taught me."

Mom's charming personality endeared her to many, and she was well beloved by her many, many friends, most of whom have preceded her in death. One friend has said, "You couldn't find a more sweetly tempered person."

Another friend, who served with her on the church board, said, "She was one of the brightest people the board ever had."

Mom was creative. This was evidenced in her calligraphy, her clothes, her home decorating skills and in her self-expression generally. Her holiday greetings were particularly delightful. She was talented in many areas and enjoyed and appreciated the creativity of others.

She also was a truly great cook. She loved trying new recipes and serving her family. I think all the grandchildren will forever remember the wonderful meals she planned and executed. She kept up this tradition long past the age at which one would think it feasible. But she never complained. She delighted in pleasing others with her good food. And I think one of the reasons she lived so long was that she believed in eating nourishing, well-balanced meals, even if she was cooking for just herself.

Mom was also a talented seamstress. She loved to put together creative outfits. She did embroidery, appliqué, smocking, and other handwork to enhance the garments she made for herself and others. Just yesterday someone told me that Mom always looked beautiful, even in her advancing years, "Like a fashion model."

Mom laughed a lot. She could laugh at herself, and she could laugh at a good joke too. She was socially gifted. With advanced age, she lost some of her former abilities, but she

never lost her social intelligence. Right up to the last she was sensitive to others and appreciative of their efforts and concerns.

Helen Jo Shaeffer had a deep and abiding faith in God. She believed in the power of prayer, and she prayed. She prayed for others, particularly the ever-widening circle of her family. She loved to look at photos of the great-grandchildren. She could spend hours looking at photos and she loved to try and determine whose features were replicated in each of the new babies.

Her very last Mothers Day was a time for many remembrances. The flowers, calls and visits she received warmed her heart and eased her discomfort. She especially loved the Collyer girls' visit. Their song and poem delighted her. "I'd like to keep those kids!" she said.

When her failing body had used up the last of its resources, she passed quietly and gently into "that good and final sleep."

We shall all miss her. And her darling dog, Patch, will miss her too. Her dog was a wonderful companion and comfort for Mom during her last years, and has been loyal to the end.

For myself, I must say that she couldn't have been a more wonderful mother-in-law. She was the only mother I have had since 1965 and we became very close friends. I am grateful for her example, for I have learned so much. I have been so richly blessed by her faith in me, her trust in me and her love for me.

I'd like to close with a quote from John Greenleaf Whittier:

Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
Since He who knows our need it just
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must...
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!

Duncan's eulogy included the well-known scripture from Proverbs about the life of a good woman whose price is far above rubies. Then he spoke about his own experience with his Nanny and her best traits. He prized her loving kindness because she always had time for him with long, long conversations. He said, "She loved to have us come over and visit and I always enjoyed talking to her." He admired her modesty and dignity. "Never one to boast or really talk about herself, she found joy and happiness in the accomplishments of others—her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren." He said that her quiet dignity, ennobling character, personal honor and aura of refinement "made her the matriarch of us all." Of her thriftiness and frugality he said, "This I believe was one of her virtues. The acquisition of numerous material goods was simply not high on her priority list." He added, "One more trait that I loved about her was that she was a wonderful cook. I remember a number of Thanksgiving dinners at her house with homemade bread, pies, etc. Later on when Mom and Dad established the tradition of having her over every Sunday night she would sometimes contribute a dish."

Prior to his remarks, Jo Ellen handed J.D. a note that read: “Duncan, if you were thinking of something kind of light-hearted to say when you get up, I was just thinking that I will no longer have anyone to tell me I’m too thin, and I need to put on weight. You know, Nanny was the only one who thought I was too skinny!”

After the service a lovely meal was provided for the family by the Presbyterian Church ladies. Many others had brought food as well. A general outpouring of sympathy and support came from many sources and was greatly appreciated.

Following the funeral the entire family made the trek to Denver to place Helen Josephine Osborne Shaeffer in a grave beside her sweet Earl. Crown Hill Cemetery was lovely in the spring and the beautiful ivory-colored roses that had graced her oak wood casket were still fresh for the interment. With the strains of “Pei Jesu,” from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Requiem* in the background, Will Irwin dedicated her grave. It was a tender moment for all of the family to say one last “good-bye.”

Book gifts to the Clovis-Carver Public Library in Jo’s memory were donated by Maurice & Jean Waters, Dolores Tansey, Bruce & Jerry Smith, and Lunell Winton.

Gifts to the P.E.O. educational project were made in Jo’s memory by Don and Gustina Bonner, Geno Walker, Ruby St. Clair, Les & Jean Morrow, Tommy & Valeria Smith, PEO Chapter AB, PEO Chapter G and by Joy Pattison.

Cards and letters:

Jo was a lovely lady—warm, talented, delightful to be around, intelligent and with a keen sense of humor. I was privileged to have her friendship. I loved her and will miss her. But I will always remember the good times. Love, Martha

It didn’t seem like Thanksgiving without a card from her! What a lady – there never will be anyone that can walk in her shoes – she inspired everyone she met. Thanks! J.D. & Audrey Killibrew

She commented to me often about how much she loved her family and I feel blessed to have been her friend. Jo was a very special lady. I will miss her very much. With love, Evelyn Kampsen

We were saddened to hear about Sister Shaeffer. She was a special lady and we are so grateful we had the privilege to know her. Our prayers are with you. May you be strengthened and comforted. With much love, Lyle, Jean & Mary [Norris]

Jo was one of our most treasured sisters. We were so lucky to have her in our chapter. Our prayers are with you. Chapter G of PEO

We were so sad to hear of Nanny’s passing, but grateful it was sweet and peaceful. We remember her with fondness. She was a very lovely lady. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Love, Paula & Courtney [Fisher]

The time I have spent with your mother has been very special to me. I will think of her every time I see my curtains and go through the motions of day to day life. Her passion

for life showed in the delight and interest she took in our lives. Her advice was wise and insightful. It has been more than just a job for me. I put her advice to use as recently as this past Mothers Day. I will miss her. The memories will be a perfume and balm throughout the coming weeks and years, as I know they will for you. She was a special person to so many and well loved. In that respect you are so much like her. Thank you for the friendship you have freely given me. I do value it. I know you will find comfort in the memories. Thank you for letting me be a part of her life. Mary Jo [Jones]

What a blessed, impacting life your mom had. What lay beneath was gifted! Our deepest condolences, Weldon and Marilyn [Killough]

I was saddened to hear of the loss of “Nanny.” In the course of our conversation the other afternoon Erin mentioned that Marty’s grandmother enjoyed reading and that she had a nice library at home. With that in mind, I have made a donation to the Clovis-Carver Public Library asking that they purchase an adult biography as well as a picture or chapter book for the juvenile collection in memory of the late Helen Jo “Nanny” Shaeffer. I hope that the chosen books in memory of Nanny will be enjoyed by everyone in Clovis and that they will remain a reminder of the affection in which Nanny was held. My love to you all, Dolores J. Tansey

With a feeling of sadness I acknowledge your message of Jo’s death...She was so modest and humble, she never bragged about her achievements. Our friendship began in Boulder in 1960 when we were in the same class of Human Relations. I vowed to myself I was not going to make any fast and lasting friendships before I went. However, we sat next to each other in one large circle (21 plus the instructors) and in four weeks without trying, a kinship was established that lasted 40 years! We’ve never met since that time but have exchanged greetings every year. I loved her beautiful calligraphy... We were quite different in many ways. I felt like a plain Jane without pretenses and she was so pretty and creative—also without pretense, but just one grand lady. At our ages (I’m 96 ½) time is taken care of, as our “number” comes up... May the memory of Jo influence your very existence. I am glad she was my friend. Most sincerely, Mabel Luing

I remember the first time I ever saw Jo. She was in her front yard and I remember thinking what an absolutely adorable looking woman she was. Little did I know that when I would meet her in person, I would be so totally captivated by her—totally captivated. I can truly say I have not met her equal in my lifetime. There is only one person who would and does come close. Her name is E.C.... Love Marietta [Kelt] and family.

...There will always be fond memories of the years that Earl and Jo were our good neighbors in the Mt. Lincoln area. Thank you for sending the obituary and the beautiful tribute to a beautiful woman. In gratitude and love, Bill and Helen Anderson Weaver

Jo was such a blessing to know and she touched the lives of so many people. I especially hold her dear to my heart. May you find comfort in your memories and know how much she loved you all. Thinking of you with love and prayers, Don & Gustenia [Bonner]

One final thought that seems entirely appropriate was found in Jo’s scrapbook of quotes. It was taken from a story in *Readers’ Digest*, and perfectly describes her final aspect: “In her casket she was little and light, because the great soul had gone out of her.”

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