

6. Marty goes to BYU – a Miracle

One of the papers Jo wrote for a graduate class in child psychology in the spring of 1965 was entitled, “A Study of Marty.” Actually, the paper had been written by Bobbie Jo Shaeffer Irwin in 1958. When Jo was working full time as the principal of two schools and continuing her education in order to earn a masters’ degree, she “borrowed” and altered the paper which was truly more about her own life than about her daughter’s. The paper describes Marty’s school experiences, though perhaps in somewhat exaggerated terms.

She wrote:

I have centered this study of emotionally disturbed children on Marty, a child who during the first grade began withdrawing, hating school and teacher and not learning. I have been in close contact with this child for thirty-three years, watched him grow from a withdrawn, highly sensitive little boy into a belligerent, aggressive, somewhat hostile adolescent, into a mature, happy, well-adjusted adult. It was this child’s problems ... that stimulated [me] to start college at forty-two in order to help children like him. Marty is my son, my youngest child.

Marty’s rate of maturation was slow. He was earlier to sit up, crawl and walk than average, but refused to say a word until [age] three when he startled the whole family by saying, “Mama, I got a good idea.” He refused absolutely to eat a bite of food unless he was at home in his own chair. If the family had to eat in a restaurant, Marty would spend the whole time making a repugnant hissing noise.

Marty was about twelve months old when his father teasingly remarked to him one day when he was taking his bottle, “You’re a baby having to swig that old bottle – tut, tut!” The baby would never accept his bottle again. Toilet training was accomplished very quickly, very easily at about thirteen months with a remark something like this, “You’re a big fellow now. Let’s use the potty from now on.” In retrospect his almost effortless training concerns me as it certainly portrays a child too vulnerable to an adult’s displeasure, tone of voice, or to say the least, a highly sensitized child. He would never go the bathroom except on his own potty chair, so that if a trip were in the offing the chair would have to be taken along. He was an apparently happy little boy, but terribly sensitive to change. [He] adored his older sister who ignored him, or was overly hateful due to her sibling jealousy of the blue-eyed blonde baby brother. These are some of the unique things I remember about Marty before he went to school. First, his stronger than average tie with the familiar and [second] his slow maturation.





His was a late August birthday and unfortunately he started school in September. If only his parents had known then what they now know, he would not have been started to school for another year. They felt he was too immature to start, but were assured by the principal that boys were always more immature than girls, and that it would hurt Marty's pride if he were kept out of school until he was seven... He didn't feel accepted or emotionally secure in his school environment for the first grade teacher, instead of accepting Marty as Marty, tried to spur him on by constantly comparing him to his sister who could color neater, could sit still longer, could write plainer, could read better... This child's self-image was destroyed in the first grade... Marty's first grade teacher was satisfactory with the well adjusted, good average student. She couldn't stand those who were slow and grew sarcastic and rejecting. When she rejected Marty he grew more naughty. He would strike the child sitting next to him for no apparent reason. This started the vicious circle. Dorothy Baruch's book on discipline has as the main thesis that a child acts naughty because he feels naughty....His feelings are the cause, his

actions the result. (Dorothy Baruch, New Ways in Discipline, New York: McGraw Hill, 1949)

...Marty's first teacher did everything possible to hinder and destroy his ego power. She did this so effectively that he went on to the second grade not reading, with a poor number base, and what's more important a low self concept... In the second grade Marty was still in the shadow of his sister, by this time he, too, believed that he could not do the work. "I'm not smart like Bobbie Jo, I'm dumb, Mother." He gave up... and for the most part sat quietly and escaped the classroom in fantasy... Fortunately, Marty did not use his dream world except in school. He was an active outdoor boy, loved to fish and did achieve success here.



Marty's parents were aware at the end of the fourth grade that drastic steps had to be taken to build Marty's self esteem. First they decided to remove him from his sister's school and put him in a new school. Secondly, they decided to put him back into the fourth grade to see if he couldn't gain some of the skills he so lacked which would mean success or failure in future school years. Thirdly,

they had a family conference to see if they couldn't all agree (mostly for his sister's benefit) to give as much praise as possible for all things Marty did even slightly well and to limit criticism to rare positive suggestion. There was a blow to Marty's inadequate ego to be back in the fourth grade, but this was smoothed over by a lie which was that Marty had been started in school when he was five and not six years old; so now he was really only eight and not nine years old. This lie was justified at the time for it soothed this damaged ego. It was hoped that by the time Marty discovered this lie his ego would be strong enough to take it, and to understand the reason behind it. However, during that second year in the fourth grade Marty was home with mumps and some way read his birth certificate and discovered the lie. Two outstanding mistakes were made here. First, the lie did not work and caused more hurt than the truth would have originally. Secondly, Marty should have been retained not in the fourth year, but the first or second year. By the time he was in the fourth grade too much resistance had been built, too strong a pattern of failure and a self-concept that he was just stupid. "Emotionally disturbed children are hampered in learning; their feelings block their abilities and school is for most of them a frustrating anxious realization of inadequacy." (Leonard Kornberg, *A Class for Disturbed Children*, New York: Columbia Univ., 1955, p. 10)

Marty's intermediate years went on in the same vein with only the break of completely happy and free summers. The family always spent three months in the high mountains and was almost isolated except for the immediate family. Hours were spent rock hunting, fishing and exploring old mining camps as well as hours spent listening to books being read by the mother. Marty had amazing powers of concentration during these times and an exceptional memory for details. He was almost a non-reader, so these sessions opened up a new world for him. It was hoped that this would kindle the urge to learn to read, but it was not successful. Incidentally the first book Marty ever read alone and without being forced was *Crime & Punishment* [Dostoyevsky] when he was aboard an ammunition ship outside Korea. This was some accomplishment for the very poor reader he was! Clark E. Moustakas in *Children in Play Therapy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1953) p. 204-6 says that some of the means to help children gain emotional insights "are listening, conveying understanding, and providing opportunities for free emotional expression...Children become wonderfully alive when they are listened to, understood and accepted." These summers free of the conflict of school gave Marty just such an opportunity. They did much to make the next year bearable. He always returned in the fall full of hope, only after October to fall back into his withdrawn behavior.

When Marty was in junior high his father [was] transferred to a mining camp high in the mountains. This isolated town lived, ate and slept basketball. Since Marty was tall the coach worked hard with him so that he would really be good material by the time he was in high school. This did help Marty's self esteem to a point where much of his hostility was gone. By the time Marty was ready for high school his father was transferred again. Marty was well trained in basketball and was outstanding enough to be [included] on the first team of the larger high school [in Grand Junction

That year the basketball team won most of its games and was going to the state playoff in



Denver. Everyone was under threat, the coach, players and even the parents. However, when the coach saw Marty smoking at the corner drug store he put him off the basketball floor at practice, took his suit and gave it to another player. He said that the boys had been told that if they broke training they couldn't go to Denver. Here was one broken child, and I might add, one sick family... His father went to the principal who called the coach. The coach explained that he was sorry, but that word had come to him that the whole team was smoking and that Marty's father must admit that it had to be stopped. He had used Marty as an example for Marty was the least valuable player. It had worked beautifully: the team had come around. If Marty's father insisted he would put Marty back on the team. Of course, his father did not insist for the damage had been done, the suit gone and the team doing beautifully without one sick boy. The team went on to victory, the school and the town went wild with joy – except one household. Marty never returned to a basketball floor again, even though he had the opportunity in another school. [Marty says that is not true. He did continue to play basketball when they returned to Grand Junction and he played a lot of intramural basketball in college.] (Dorothy Baruch, op. cit. says that:) "You seldom remember what you are punished for, but you remember the punishment."

Marty's parents explained to him the night he graduated from high school that they would make it possible for him to go to college, but they would not pull him through. It was all right with them if he decided not to go. Marty was sincerely shocked that his parents had entertained the thought that he might not go to college. It was not easy to get a boy into college who rated thirty-fourth from the bottom in a class of over two hundred. After many unsuccessful attempts [to get him into a college] the registrar of Brigham Young University answered a desperate mother with this, "We are not interested in your son's grades, we are interested in your son." And they were!

... With their guidance and his hard work he made it through the first year with confidence enough to get him through four hard years in the navy. He returned and graduated from [Brigham Young] University and now is a young father and successful young business man. Somebody cared!



Jo got an A on the foregoing paper. Her professor wrote: "This is a wonderful report. As in a painting each brush stroke counts and carries a meaning. Your picture of Marty has

real meaning since it concerns the inner world of a child and the affect of this on learning. It has deep roots!”

Just a note about Marty’s education: It wasn’t as bad as Jo’s paper would have one believe. When the family lived in Cripple Creek, Colorado, Jo and Earl received this letter from the superintendent of schools:

*February 7, 1944
Dear Mr. and Mrs. Shaeffer:*

Marty ranked the highest in an arithmetic test that I gave last month. He did especially well and is progressing splendidly and did eleven problems right out of fifteen that I gave. I want to congratulate you on the fine work done by your son and I want you to know what a fine boy your son really is.

*Thanks many times for your fine cooperation.
Sincerely yours,
Leslie Wilkinson, Supt. of Schools*



The *real* story behind Marty’s being accepted at Brigham Young University was this (as told to the writer in 2004): Marty and a friend, also from Grand Junction, rode the train over to Salt Lake City and took the entrance exam at the University of Utah.

After the test they walked downtown and, as he recalled, they were not far from Temple Square when “just out of the blue this fellow started talking to us.” Marty remembered very clearly that he told them to go down to Provo and go see a certain person, a friend of his, in the administration building at BYU whose name he wrote on a piece of paper, handing it to the boys. They

then boarded the train, got off in Provo, walked up to the administration building and found the person whose name had been given them. They were both welcomed with open arms and registered as students. But Marty has always regarded it as a kind of miracle that at a critical juncture in his life a stranger intervened, setting his feet on a path that led to success and happiness.

At BYU Marty lived at Wymount Village, temporary dorms that housed many returning servicemen, and later became Married Housing until new quarters were built. The university was growing fast and had the same challenges as did all the colleges with the influx of students after WWII taking advantage of the GI Bill which provided student

financial aid. Marty enjoyed college life, did reasonably well and played a lot of intramural basketball.

After one year at Brigham Young University, Marty enlisted in the U.S. Navy. His draft number was coming up and he would have been called into the army. Remembering what he had heard about the army versus the navy while living in Cripple Creek, he chose the navy. Marty's first tour of duty was aboard the U.S.S. Virgo, an ammunition transport ship. However, his four-year tour of duty during the Korean War was spent mostly in the submarine service where he earned the rank of Chief Petty Officer. He became a skilled navigator aboard the U.S.S. Razorback, which is now a naval museum in the City of North Little Rock, Arkansas. At the end of the Korean War the submarine was sold to the nation of Turkey. Then in 2004 it was acquired by a group in Arkansas and became the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum (<http://www.northlr.org/maritime-museum/>).



Aboard the transport ship



Signalman



USO dance in Japan



Submariners

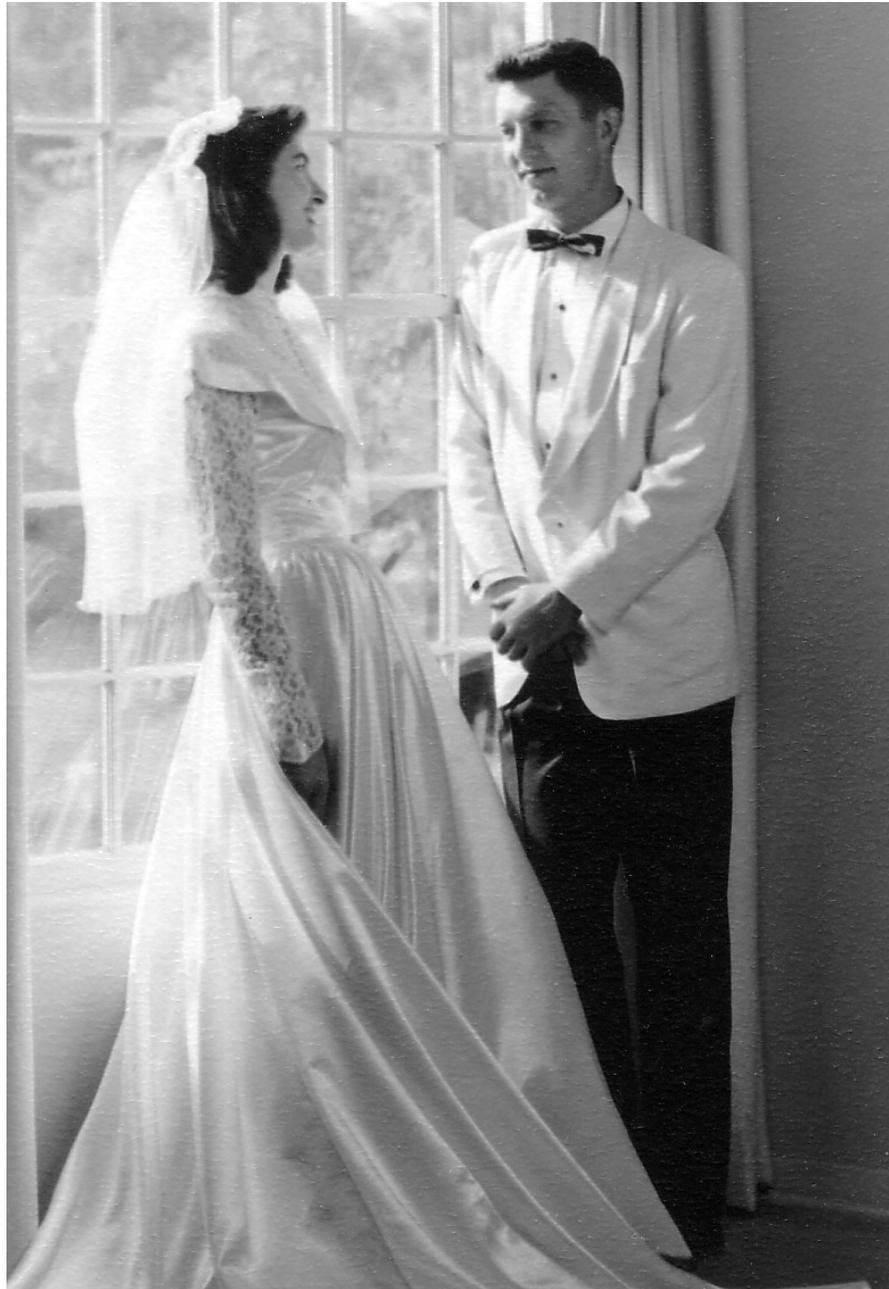
Jo and Earl were never at ease about their son's service in the Navy. They were fully patriotic, but WWII was too recent in their memories. They joined him once when he was on leave in San Francisco, and they came to San Diego for his mustering out ceremony in 1955.

Marty returned to Brigham Young University in the fall of 1955 to resume his studies. He changed his major from engineering to industrial management when he realized that he would enjoy business a lot more than engineering.

While skiing at Alta one cold Saturday in 1956 Marty met Ellen Claire Weaver, a BYU co-ed who hailed from Chicago. A courtship ensued and they were married August 20, 1957 in the new Los Angeles, California temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Following their marriage, Marty finished his last year at Brigham Young University while E.C. taught 4th grade at Wasatch Elementary School in Provo. Their dear friends, Dick and Vernadeen Vetterli lived next door and the two couples, who had often double-dated prior to their marriages,

continued to do so afterwards as well. Both husbands were finishing their education, both wives were teaching school, having earned their degrees in 1957.



By 1959 Jo and Earl had many reasons to be proud of their son, Marty. He had finished college, had married and started a family of his own when he took a job with the

telephone company in Albuquerque, New Mexico. On December 11th of that year Ellen Claire gave birth to their first child, a son named Earl Martin Shaeffer III.

Only months before, on July 22, 1959, Bobbie Jo had given birth to her third and last child, a daughter named Elizabeth Jo Irwin. For the senior Shaeffers, the year ended with a celebration of their now four grandchildren.

Marty's job with the telephone company came after a short career, to be later resumed, in the building business. Doug Dana of Dana Homes in Phoenix had hired Marty to build several large custom homes in Albuquerque. Marty had attended Arizona State University for one semester of graduate work, then went to work for Dana. E. C. taught third grade at the Rose Lane Elementary School in central Phoenix, riding her bicycle to school each day while Marty drove to Tempe, the same university where his son, J. Duncan Shaeffer now teaches.



Jo kept a copy of the talk Marty gave as a presentation to the marketing department of the Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co.'s Albuquerque district conference July 10, 1961. In it he said:

This may sound ridiculous, but work can be fun. The only real reward that life can offer is the thrill of achievement and the place that achievement amounts the most is on the job. Remember! Nothing you do will be quite as exciting as a well earned promotion. The good salesman is the one who does a better job of reaching the minds of others.

The greatest salesmen I know have a warm and human understanding of what their product will do for the other fellow, and they have ideas. If they don't have ideas they go out and get them from someone who does. Very few people are naturally expert at this type of human relations, but like any other skill it can be learned and improved amazingly by practice, and it automatically pays off in greater sales and greater happiness on the job.

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