

Chapter 2

Family, Friends and Football

From Steve's autobiography, written 1989:

Ever since childhood I have always liked sports. My favorite sport is football but I like almost all other sports too such as volleyball, soccer, track, basketball and many others. At five years of age I played soccer. Everybody said I was too rough. After being in that four years I stopped and went to football. Football is my favorite sport. Two years ago I played tight end and it was fun. Our team record was six wins and three losses.



Stephen started playing little league Football for the Brighton League at age nine and played through age fifteen. One day he came home and told his dad that the man who was in charge of his age group said there were not enough coaches. Steve explained that there were about seventy kids in his age group and the league only had one coach.

Officials wanted to field three teams. So Steve's older brother Matt rounded up some friends and a few fathers to coach Stephen's team. It was a great joy for Steve's parents to watch him play under Matt. His dad still remembers one particularly long run and a touchdown Steve made that season.

In 1987 I played fullback and it was rough getting tackled by the linemen. The main thing I did was block for the halfbacks. We went to the championship game and we lost to our other Brighton Team 7-6. To this day, I still think about the last game of the season when we failed to make our extra point.

Stephen attended Churchill Jr High in seventh grade but he missed his neighborhood friends and so he transferred to Albion Middle School for eighth and ninth. Then Steve had to decide whether to go to Brighton or Skyline High School. He finally decided to go to Skyline where he played defense on the sophomore team. His father remembers one game in particular. Skyline was ahead so the coach put Steve in the game. The other team had the ball and their runner sprinted down the field. It looked as if he would get a touchdown until Steve made the tackle and prevented the other team from scoring.

Summers were a favorite time for the Stokoe family because Steve's parents were out of school and the family could travel. Steve wrote this about a 1988 vacation:

Last summer our family went to Hawaii. My two brothers and I stayed with my Aunt Lilian while my parents continued on to Western Samoa. This was the first time my brothers and I had the opportunity to meet our Hawaiian cousins. Their names are Sean, Kaimana, Shane and Chad. We stayed in Hauula on the island of Oahu. We were there for four weeks. Some of the things we did were swimming, body surfing, hiking up to Sacred Falls, which was about a three mile hike, and going around the island, visiting the Polynesian Cultural Center, going to Sea Life Park, snorkeling and playing with our cousins.

Two things happened that were not too good. First, I went to a scout camp and this fat, Hawaiian kid got mad at me because I flicked some water on him for fun so he stabbed me in the back with a knife. I went to the hospital and the doctor fixed me up. Four days later I was walking down a street and a Doberman pincer ran up to me and bit my leg. My brother David got bitten by mosquitoes and the bites got infected. Hawaiian kids wanted to fight my brother David and I and my Aunt Lilian had to yell at them. The only one that nothing happened to was my little brother Neil. He told everyone he was Hawaiian so nobody beat him up.

We visited Pearl Harbor and the Arizona Memorial and spent a week on the island of Kauai. Then we flew back to California, visited Universal Studios and Disneyland, drove back to Las Vegas and then to St George. On the way our car burned up but some kind people picked us up and took us into St. George. We stayed for two days while they were fixing our car. We saw the play "As You Like It" in Cedar City. My Dad enjoyed the plays because he used to act in them many years ago. It was a long vacation. After fifty-two days it was good to be home.

Chapter 3

Skyline, Depression and Drugs

Stephen began having major academic problems at the end of ninth grade at Albion Middle School. Not a very organized student, he always needed help with assignments and was often late getting his work in. He usually got B's and C's but during his final quarter at Albion Steve failed geography and English. Both classes were required for high school graduation. This meant that Steve had to take two summer classes in order to stay on track for graduation and be eligible to play football in the fall.

Steve's dad was uncomfortable about his decision to attend Skyline. He felt it would be better for Steve to go to Brighton. Diane disagreed because Brighton had such a large student body. She felt he would do better in a smaller school where he could get more attention and help.

Skyline stressed academics. Immediately Stephen found his classes very difficult. His mother was able to help him in English and world history. However, she was not able to help him with math and science. Diane discovered that Steve was good at memorization. When he memorized answers, he could get A's and B's on tests. He did well in Spanish because his teacher, Dr. Ibarra, placed him on the front row and asked questions in Spanish each day. While Steve found the arrangement somewhat embarrassing, he soon discovered he was learning Spanish and able to keep up.

During Christmas vacation, Steve participated in a sub-for-Santa activity with his friend Clay and Clay's family. Sandy M. was close to her three sons friends and their friends. She particularly liked Steve. Clays family decided help a single father and his three small children. Their mother had abandoned the family. The father road to work each day on a bicycle. They had little money. Clay's family, along with Steve and others, spent a day repainting the family's apartment, setting up bunk beds and assembling new furniture. New clothes and gifts for the children were purchased and wrapped. A tree was decorated and Christmas dinner prepared. This was a project Steve enjoyed.

Tenth grade students were required to take standard tests. A counselor met with Steve and his father to go over his SAT results. Although Steve ranked in the low to average ability range, no one suggested special programs or any remedial classes.

The first social activity Stephen attended at Skyline was the "Hello Dance" in October, 1992 His date was Anna Marie. They attended the dance with a group of friends. When Steve invited Anna she admitted she had already received another invitation but had declined because she hoped Steve might ask her. She accept his



invitation and he was delighted as he preferred cute blonds.

Steve and Anna Marie attended Granite High in their senior year. Had Steve's choices taken him down a different road, Anna might have been his date at Granite High's Home Coming dance in October, 1994. But Steve had taken acid the afternoon of the dance. Anna found him walking along ninth east in a dazed condition. He had relapsed after being released from Western Institute just two weeks earlier.

What caused such a dramatic change in a young man? Medical reports listed bad grades, conflicts with friends, problems with parents and depression. Would Steve have been more successful in one of several classes offered at Brighton High designed for low achievers? Today, we can only wonder.

Though some teachers at Skyline, like Dr. Ibarra, gave Steve a lots of help, others made no effort to

change their requirement or tailor their work for low achievers. Steve, and several of his friends, had a difficult time in biology. Diane visited the teacher to find out how she might help her son.

Mr. S. explained that Steve needed to pay attention and stop socializing so much in class. Also, he needed to carefully read each chapter and answer the review questions. Diane was told that if her son would do this, he would have no trouble passing the weekly tests. Stephen was compliant. He brought the biology text book home. His mother read the chapter aloud to him. However, the book was written in very technical language that neither could understand. Diane complained that Steve's text book read like an upper division college text. She tried to help him but neither of them could do the work.

When Tom came home Diane explained that she was never very good at science and simply could not help Stephen in that subject. So Tom worked with him. It

took another hour to answer a few more questions. Tom had difficulty with the assignment. That night, Stephen and his parents spent well over two hours on one chapter. Still at the end of the evening, many questions were unanswered.

Diane called the school the next day to ask if perhaps a tutor could be found. Biology was a graduation requirement and Diane feared that failing the class might prevent Steve from graduating. Each night after school the tutor, an honors student, met with Steve in his father's classroom. A few weeks later Diane asked Mr. S. how Steve was doing. The teacher replied that he was able to get his assignments in now he had a sharp student doing his work for him. Steve was getting discouraged, toward the end of the term he simply stopped showing up for the study sessions, it embarrassed him to sit in his father's classroom after school with a bright student who did his biology assignments for him.

Because Steve struggled academically, he began to feel that he was not good enough to associate with "*the preppies.*" He became paranoid about the bright kids in his priesthood quorum at church. He was sure that none of them liked him. He became convinced that the whole world knew he was dumb. He began to socialize with students who spent a lot of time hanging out in the parking lot. Steve began sluffing and going to breakfast and his grades fell. In May, 1993, Steve spent the night with a fellow football player from the Skyline area. The next morning a police officer brought him home. Steve was found hopping fences and running through back yards in an east side neighborhood. His eyes were shining with a strange glow.

Steve was confused about where he had been and what had actually taken place the previous evening. He said he had gone to the University of Utah Mayfest on Friday night. He told David he had been chased by gang members with machine guns and had witnessed a battle between gang members and the police. He said he was pursued by gangsters and he described an exciting escape. Sometime during the night Steve lost his shoes and his arms and legs had been badly scratched by branches, thorns and bushes.

Steve's parents were not sure what had happened but insisted that Steve take a drug test. The results came back negative.¹ Test results indicated that Steve had ingested only a small amount of an opiate--which seemed logical, Steve loved poppy seed muffins.

Still unsure what Steve had been up to, Tom pulled Steve's friend out of class on Monday. The youth admitted introducing Steve to Marazine. He explained they had spent Saturday night in a field. The student apologized and assured Tom he would talk to his own parents and get professional help. Evidently he had a drug problem.

¹Later they discovered that Marazine, an over the counter drug developed to offset motion sickness, does not show up in drug tests.

The youth could not have known that Steve had an addictive personality, a low tolerance for any drug and a genetic predisposition for substance abuse for Steve's grandfather was an alcoholic.

His great-grandfather, Thomas Stokoe Sr. , had been a teetotaler--an Englishman pledged to total abstinence from intoxicating drink. Great-grandfather never used liquor and did not allow it in the house. Young Tom never touched alcohol until he was twenty-seven years old and working in a logging camp in New Zealand. One night he accepted a drink. That was the beginning of a life long addiction. He was never able to stop. Drinking caused serious problems in his marriage to Steve's grandmother, a devout Mormon. It embarrassed and humiliated her and their children. Addictive behavior usually skips a generation. The children of alcoholics often have zero tolerance for substance abuse in their own kids. Tom's attitude toward drug use was classic and predicable.

When the Stokoes finally discovered what Steve had been up to, they grounded him. He was not allowed to go anywhere but to school for two weeks. Time at home would be spent getting caught up in his classes. Steve was compliant but frustrated. He was also angry and humiliated. As Memorial Day weekend approached, his curfew was lifted. But Steve decided he was going camping with his friends regardless of the consequence . He walked up the street to Clay's house. Shortly after he left home, his mother called to ask if he had completed one book report. Steve refused to come to the phone fearing he was about to be grounded again. Rather than take the call from his mother, he bolted and ran².

The most dramatic change in Steve occurred during his sophomore year. Steve began the year happy, hopeful and enthused about high school. He was the kind, considerate, obedient son his family had known and lived with for fifteen years. However, as the school year wore on, Steve encountered one academic failure after another. He was ashamed of his performance and knew he was embarrassing his dad. Naturally shy, Steve's confidence began to dissipate. He became involved with friends who smoked and used drugs. Steve concluded his Sophomore year angry, frustrated, defiant, confused and on the run.

²Running away is typical behavior for some kids who suffer from Attention Deficite Disorder. Normal Beta brain waves are 12 cycles per second or more. Most people function on this level. Alpha brain waves are 7 to 12 cycles per second. This is the day dreaming state and is the best range to learn in. Theta brain waves are from 4 to 7 cycles per second. This state is marked by poor judgment and inability to see beyond the moment. Most ADD kids register in this state. Delta brain waves are 0 to 4 cycles per second. This is deep rem sleep. ADD kids never get to this level of consciousness, consequently, they sleep poorly which results in high levels of stress and depression. McMahon, Frank & Judith and Tonny Romano, Psychology and You (Los Angeles: West Publishing Company, c.1990) **Diane wondered if Steve's brain waves, vibrating in a different frequency together with other disabilities, enabled Steve to see things happening on different level of consciousness?**

Diagnostic Summary from Wasatch Canyon, L.D.S. hospital. Date of Admission 6-03-92, Date of Discharge 6-16-92. Stamped "Confidential."

Summary of events precipitating hospitalization:

_____ Stephen was held back in kindergarten and had some low test scores in elementary school. He required special programs to help with learning. He seemed to do fairly well in school until his last term of ninth grade. He was always a shy, easily embarrassed, quiet boy who was very much a follower.

Towards the end of ninth grade he got tired of school. He began sluffing and his grades fell. In tenth grade he joined the football team where he played linebacker at Skyline High School. His grades were poor, however. He had some difficulty making friends in this new school. He seemed to gravitate to friends who were not very successful people and smoked and drank. He began sluffing school more as the school year progressed. His mood became increasingly depressed. He began having conflicts with his friends. Stephen states that his friends began making false accusations and withdrew from him, which really upset him. His friends became the most important thing to him and not school.

Because of bad grades, his parents had increasingly tight curfews which upset him and he was grounded for two weeks. He responded to this grounding by running away for ten days where he stayed at a friend's house. He also stole a bike. (The night this incident occurred Steve's mother discovered where he was staying. She sent brother Matt to talk with him and invite him to come home. Steve promised Matt he would call home later that evening. When he returned to the house where he had been staying he found that his friends had locked him out. They called him names and refused to let him in. He went to a local market and purchased Marazine.)

Steve became so upset about his parents' curfews, the grounding, and the rejection by friends that he finally overdosed on Marazine and alcohol. He states that he took more than five times the recommended dosage of Marazine, namely twenty-four tablets, in an effort to escape. (After taking the pills Steve decided to call home. While walking toward a friend's house to make the call, he noticed a bike and began riding it.) He was confronted by some kids regarding the theft and at that point began having seizures. He fell down into the creek bed, scratching and cutting himself badly and went into convulsions. Paramedics were called and he was taken to the Alta View Emergency Room where he was incubate. When he finally awoke, he remembers nothing after the owner of bicycle confronted him.

_____ Diane had waited several hours for Steve's call home. It was close to midnight when the phone finally rang. It was the police. "Can you describe your son and tell us what he is wearing?" Diane replied that Steve was 6 feet tall and weighed about 155 pounds. She confessed that she had no idea what he was wearing. He had been gone ten days. "Why not just ask him his name?" She suggested.

“We are calling from the emergency room at Alta View Hospital,” the officer explained. “The boy we have here is unconscious. Could you come over and identify him?”

Tom and Diane were the third set of parents to visit the emergency room that night. The police were working through their list of run-a-ways. The Stokoes identified their son. He was strapped to a table and having convulsions. He had been given an EKG. “Do you have any idea what is wrong with this young man?” the doctor asked his father.

“Perhaps you should pump his stomach,” his father answered. “He had a problem three weeks earlier. He was acting strangely. We discovered he had taken a drug called Marazine.”

Steve always regretted his first experience with drugs. Two years later he made his younger brother promise him that he would never touch them.

“It is the most stupid thing I ever did,” he said to Neil. ***“Drugs really messed up my life.”***

For kids like Steve with little or no tolerance, his first encounter opened up a Pandora’s box of problems, invited spirit possession and changed the course of Steve’s life.