

Chapter 6

Home and Granite High School

Steve returned to Salt Lake on Sunday, August 21, 1993, the day before his mother began a new job as library media co-ordinator at Granite High School. During the first faculty meeting she mentioned to an assistant coach that she had a son who played football and was looking for a high school to attend.

Mark Nelson, Granite's head football coach, suggested that Stephen come by and talk to him. Steve and his cousin, Sean, drove to the school the next afternoon to watch the Farmer's practice. Sean encouraged Steve to attend Granite and join the team. Steve visited Coach Nelson the next day. He said that even though he was a senior and had missed summer practice Steve could play on the JV team until he earned a place with the Varsity Squads.

Granite High seemed like a wise choice for Steve. He had only one semester remaining until graduation. Skyline was no longer an option. Steve's parents were now opposed to enrollment at Brighton because many of Steve's druggie friends attended the neighborhood school. They constantly worried about Steve's poor judgment and feared that these boys might be a bad influence on him. Diane talked to Steve about his father's recent hospitalization for an irregular heart beat. She cautioned Steve to avoid his drug buddies because hanging with them infuriated Tom.

Steve's family prayed that a new school and an opportunity to play football might keep Steve busy as he completed the final semester of his senior year. Cousin Sean was staying with the Stokoes as he prepared to return to Snow College. He spent time with Stephen. Diane called Dr. R. at Western Institute to report the strange experiences Steve had in Hawaii. However, with football practice and getting settled into a new school she was unable to schedule an appointment at Western Institute for Steve. Dr. R. was going out of town. He suggested that Steve continue taking Retalin. He would see Steve and do a complete evaluation when he returned.

Though Steve was busy with Sean, football practice and settling into a new school, his drug buddies continued to call every night, even though they were not allowed to "hang out." One Friday night while Steve was off with the Granite High varsity football team, he received six calls within an hour. Evidently there was a big party going on somewhere. Steve's parents were in despair because they were experiencing a repeat of what had happened when he returned from Hawaii the previous year. Steve would leave town for a few months and his life would improve. As soon as he returned, he would get a lot of pressure to move back into the party scene--a world of drugs and alcohol--and then his life would begin to sour and fall apart again.

Steve told his Mom to relax, he planned to graduate. However, he would not

commit to staying away from his neighborhood friends.

"Mom, don't worry! I can handle it," he assured Diane.

As both his brother and many of his cousins played on high school teams, Steve was pleased to be invited to play with the Farmers. Everyone in the family encouraged him and he hoped to do well. During the two days before school started, Steve could watch but could not participate until he had a physical exam. Diane was rather surprised to see him at school on a Thursday afternoon. He arrived in the library in an agitated state. He had taken the physical that morning but had lost the form. He had spent two hours looking for it without any luck and he was very upset because he was missing practice.

Diane tried to convince him to go out to the field and talk to the coach but Steve was too embarrassed to explain in front of the entire team. Frustrated and angry, he was in the process of leaving when Diane called after him. "Come and meet my friend Miss J. I taught with her at Kennedy and she coaches girl's soccer." Miss J. talked to Steve and succeeded in calming him down. She convinced him to go out on the field and explain the situation to coach Nielson. Steve finally agreed and returned later to tell his mother that the coach said if he could find the form to report back to the field by 4:00 p.m. It was 2:30.

Diane called the doctor's office but was told that the doctor had left for the day. The nurse explained that she did not keep a copy of the physical and so could not fax it to Granite. The office would not verify that Steve had passed the exam. Again Steve became upset. His mother told him to go home and she would join him there. She promised she would locate the lost form. When she arrived home, Diane told Steve that there was someone who had awesome power and would help him. Together Steve, Diane and Neil knelt and asked God to help them find the form "in the next few minutes."

Steve began searching through the family room. Diane and Neil went down to Steve's room. The room was a mess. Steve had spent hours looking and had pulled the room apart. The arm chair was upside down. The cushion was on the bed. Bureau drawers were opened, with their contents spilled over the floor. Suddenly Diane noticed Steve's Y.D.E. trunk. The lid was up. She reached down behind it and discovered the lost form. Neil rushed up stairs calling, "Steve, is this what you are looking for?"

They hurried out to buy Steve a mouthpiece as kick off time neared. They returned home. Steve boiled the mouth guard and marked it. Time was running out. Just before they left the house Diane said, "Steve, you know who helped us find your physical. Don't you think we ought to thank him?" Steve agreed. "And is there anything else you need?" she asked.

“Yes, Let’s ask God to help me play well in the game today.”

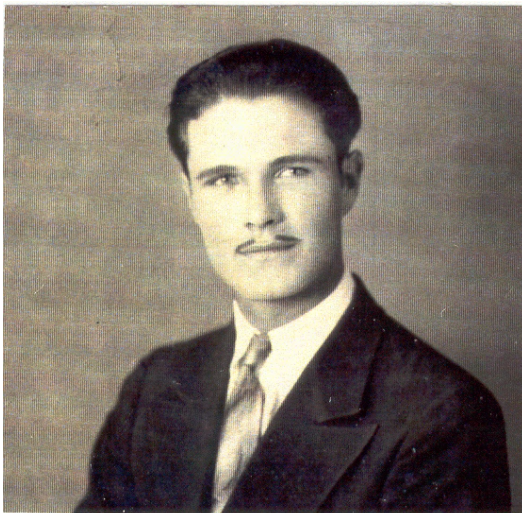
Steve returned to Granite at 4:00 p.m. just as the J.V. team was going out on to the field. He handed the form to the coach and collected his equipment. He quickly changed and joined the team on the field. This was the first time he had been allowed to suited up. As he arrived on the field the coach yelled, "Stokoe, you're in!"

Steve started as defensive end. He played the entire game and did so well that the coach said:

"Maybe we should send all our players to Hawaii to pick pineapple." The other coaches were surprised that Nielson put Steve in the game. "We don't even know the kid," one remarked. "Let's see what he can do," Nielson replied.

Steve enjoyed playing for the Farmers. He played with the JV team but complained to his mother he felt he should also be starting on the varsity squad. "I'm really one of the better players, I can't see why Mr. B. (the defensive coach) doesn't play me more." His mother video taped games and encouraged Steve while he waited for an opportunity to shine. Picking pineapple had made him physically strong and he seemed happier than he had been for a long time. But Diane worried about how he

was doing emotionally. He seemed reluctant to talk about the possession experiences and she knew Steve was the kind of kid who needed to work through things. She decided it might help to review his grandfather Johnson's autobiography including his possession experience.



This photo was taken of Elder Dean A. Johnson, age 19, just before he left for Australia. After the possession experience, the mission president asked Elder Johnson to write up the incident and submit it for the mission files. He carefully penned this account:

Five young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two were serving missions for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Adelaide, Australia. They were Elmer S. Palmer, presiding, Alva E. Jensen, Therice H. Duncan, Dean A. Johnson and Joseph F. Durfey. This was their experience:

On the night of July 21, 1929 at the conclusion of Sunday services, a very pronounced manifestation of the power of the priesthood was given. As the day's activities continued we felt an unusual influence, one which was not conducive to a full enjoyment of the Spirit of the Lord.

At the conclusion of the evening meeting, Elder Palmer called upon Elder Durfey to offer the closing prayer. As Durfey arose to do so he was seized with a power which weakened his system and he could scarcely stand at the pulpit. With considerable effort he pronounced a brief benediction and left the hall. He went out onto the sidewalk hoping that he could free himself of the disturbing feelings. He walked back and forth in a narrow passageway at the side of the Church. Rather than obtaining relief the darkness seemed to become more dense. He felt certain that he was possessed of an evil spirit and struggled desperately to call upon the Lord to relieve him of it. He was conscious of the presence of his father, who had been dead for some years, walking at his side vainly attempting to assist him.

Failing in this effort, Elder Durfey entered the home they were living in located at the rear of the church. Going up stairs to his bedroom, he knelt down and attempted to pray. By exercising all the power in his being, he said a brief prayer. Leaving the upper room he again went outside and was leaning against the rear wall when Elder Johnson found him. He described his condition to Elder Johnson who informed him that he too had felt this same evil influence, though apparently to a lesser degree. As they talked the tension intensified. As they entered the house they met Elders Palmer, Duncan, and Jensen, and discussed the unusual condition they all felt. In describing what followed Elder Johnson writes:

We, having previously planned a trip to Gawler to do missionary work, were to leave immediately after the meeting. Elders Duncan and Jensen were sent to call a taxi. Elders Durfey Palmer and myself were left in the room by ourselves. There could be heard a loud, dull whistle blowing at the freight yards about a mile away, which added to the dismal feeling.

During this time the evil power was gaining a stronger hold on our bodies. It became so strong that my whole body was cold and it trembled with a force I could not control. My face became pale. I looked into Elder Durfey's face and saw that it was twitching, and he had no control over his chin. Elder Palmer, seeing the condition said, "Something is going to happen." We all felt the same way having experienced the dull feeling coming on a week before hand.

Elder Palmer turned to Elder Durfey and said, "Come we will administer to you." We went into the other room. I was so weak I could hardly stand up and as I was anointing his head with holy oil, there was a force trying to prevent me from doing it. I stood cold and shaking from head to foot for about half a minute. At last, new life entered into my body and seemed to loosen my tongue and lips so I could speak. My works were broken and I was so weak that I could scarcely finish.

All the time I was anointing, my hands seemed to be knocked from off his head as if done by some human power. As the anointing was completed, the room appeared black to my mortal eyes. The cold, dull feeling seemed to paralyze my body. It became almost stiff.

Elder Palmer and I, with much courage, placed our hands upon his head to seal the anointing. Again the bones and nerves of my body began to tremble and the cold, stunning feeling went through my system again as if it were being carried by a high voltage of electricity.

When Elder Palmer rebuked the evil spirit the first time, I felt it leave the head of Elder Durfey, go up through my arms and out of my body. At the same time I heard the door of the room give a dull rumble. The sealing went on for nearly ten minutes. Three distinct times the evil spirits were rebuked, and three times I felt the terrible overwhelming power let loose of my body, and each time I heard the dull rumble at the door. The third time the spirits were rebuked I felt new life enter my body and I became calm and quiet, yet I was very weak. Just as we said, "Amen" to the sealing of the administration, the dull sound of the whistle at the freight yards stopped.

We went into the other room feeling greatly relieved that evil influence was gone. The other Elders returned from calling the taxi. They entered the house just as the administration ended. We explained what had occurred while they were away. Elder Durfey had been in the Mission field four weeks. He arose and said in a calm clear voice: "For one month I have been asking the Lord, in prayer, that he would use me as an instrument through whom the power of the Priesthood might be made manifest. I know that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Elder Johnson continues, "We were all very weak and continued to feel that we were in some danger, so we decided to have a circle prayer. As we knelt with our arms about each others shoulders, Elder Palmer offered the most heart-touching prayer I have ever heard in all my life. Never in all my existence have I felt so humble and so in need of God's blessings as I did at that time. Our heads were together in circle prayer and tears were dropping from my eyes, but all the time my heart was centered on God's laws and commandments. Never was I more desirous in knowing what to do as I was then.

After the prayer was over we arose to our feet with weakness of body, but strong in the assurance that we knew God would free us from all the powers of evil. . . I bear testimony to all that may read this that it is true. I know that God hears and answers prayers, and acknowledges the administrations that are performed by the power of the priesthood; that the divine priesthood holds the power to rebuke evil spirits. I seal this testimony to all that read it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior."

It was helpful to know that Steve's Grandfather Johnson dealt with the demonic forces and was still able to serve a successful mission. Diane explained that for many years after the incident, her father often awoke at night very frightened. She pointed out that what had happened on Maui was probably still pretty disturbing. However, with faith and trust in the Lord, she knew Steve would be able to cope and put the incident behind him. Steve found reviewing his grandfather's experience helpful but it did not

solve his problems.

During the month of September, 1994, he was a walking battlefield. Steve spent time with his cousin Sean, and attended church meetings with his family but still did not feel comfortable in his priest quorum. Many of the boys he met at Youth Development Enterprises were calling and stopping by. He was making new friends at Granite High, his drug buddies were calling daily. One friend, Brad T. who had dropped out of Brighton, was at the door every night Diane sent him off, explaining Steve had a lot of homework, but he would be back within the hour wanting Steve to take him some where. He was very persistent even when Steve was heavily involved in football and unavailable.

Steve even enjoyed football practice. He said he liked tackling and he could hit hard. He missed the announcement that the team would practice at 4:00 p.m on Labor Day. His absence meant that he would not be playing in the next J.V. game. But that is football. If you don't show you don't play. All things considered, football provided a great opportunity for a new beginning for Steve at Granite. He made new friends. Many, including Clay Monahan, had a very positive influence on Steve. Early on however, Steve began having academic problems. He began skipping classes and started falling behind.

Steve had done well at Y.D.E taking one class at a time. He took Retalin and his Luna's always called when his prescription ran low. The Y.D.E.s program involved working most of the day and taking only one or two classes in the evening. This is an ideal schedule for an A.D.D. kid. Taking seven classes each day seemed to overwhelm Steve. His teachers began talking to his mother. Steve promised to do better. He tried taking more Retalin. **"Retain makes me smart,"** he told her.

Meanwhile, Steve's drug buddies were skipping classes and failing at Brighton. Weekends they pressured Steve to move back into the drug scene. Sometimes he would join them at parties. On one or two occasions he stayed out all night. Steve said he wanted to do well but his notoriously poor judgment and need for constant activity often played havoc with his best efforts to change. His mother confronted him about smoking marijuana.

"I can't do marijuana, Mom, I play football," he responded.

But there was no denying the marijuana pipe in his car, the dust on the seats and the heavy smell after he had spent an evening with the neighborhood drug buddies. His mother withheld driving privileges. But then, druggie friends would show up to take him places. Finally, in complete frustration, Diane told Steve to tell his drug friends that if they refused to leave him alone she would call the police. Diane and Tom felt good about Y.D.E. friends and the Granite football players he hung out with. But Steve knew so many people it was becoming more and more difficult to monitor him.

Academically, things began to unravel for Steve the last week of September. Several teachers complained about missing assignments and failed tests. The only thing Steve had going for him was his participation in the football program. The last Monday in September Steve finally got the news he was waiting for. Coach Nielson told him that he had earned a starting position in the varsity game with Woods Cross on Wednesday. He was pleased and excited. However, the next afternoon, Steve missed a team meeting believing that it was just for the players who received awards.

Wednesday he went to school as usual. Sometime between second and fifth period one of the members of the football team told Steve that because he missed the meeting he would not be playing in the game that afternoon. Later, Diane tried to find out why the player had deliberately misled Steve. He refused to meet with her. But the end result was that Steve was devastated. He was picked up outside the school for sluffing. The school deputy marched him to the office. The Vice Principal chewed him out, "This behavior is inappropriate for a football player who ought to be a good example to others." He ordered Steve to sit down until he had time to deal with the situation. Steve reacted by bolting for the door and running off. Failing grades, losing an important opportunity and getting into trouble at school sent him over the edge.

Steve went to a supplier in the central city area and bought acid laced sugar cubes. He began eating them like candy. He did not return to school that day to leave with the team for Woods Cross. He simply disappeared for the next four days. The sad part of this story is that Steven really was scheduled to start in the game that afternoon. The coach was surprised when Steve did not show to dress or leave with the team. Coach Nielson felt Steve had come along well and had given him a starting position on the varsity team. He felt very bad about what had happened: "I've told the guys that if they have a problem they are to come and talk it over with me. They should never act on hearsay."