



What Mary Lou Taught Me

BY ARN SHEIN

I folded my notes and stuffed them into my jacket pocket, well aware that the audience was being particularly generous with its applause. As editor of *The Daily Item* sports department in Port Chester, New York, and the author of a daily

column, "Spotlight on Sports," it was not unusual for me to speak at sports banquets. But the warm reception on that particular night in 1966 was especially gratifying since my ailing nine-year-old daughter, Lindy, had just heard me speak publicly for the first time.

During the first few moments of the half-hour ride home, there was a strange, almost eerie, silence. I couldn't help but wonder what was going through my daughter's mind. Finally, the silence was broken.

"Mommy could never do that!"

“What?”

“You know! What you did tonight. Mommy could never get up in front of 500 people and give a speech like that.”

Before I had a chance to say anything, Lindy leaned across the front seat of the car and kissed me on the cheek. She then closed her eyes and gently rested her sleepy head against my arm.

I was glad her eyes were closed, and even more grateful for the dark of night because I could sense

was the happiest and luckiest man on the face of the earth. Not only was I madly in love with my bride, but I was on the sports staff of a daily paper, earning the munificent salary of \$50, payable each and every Wednesday.

We desperately wanted a family, but each time we thought Mary Lou might be pregnant, we were in for a disappointment. The greatest letdown of all came on our fifth wedding anniversary in 1956

stages of her life, was just a year old then, and Mary Lou was well into a difficult pregnancy with Kelli, our youngest daughter.

I thought long and hard about that dark period in our lives. My hours were such that I was able to offer little help at home, but I couldn't remember my wife ever once complaining. I know she prayed a whole lot, but if she ever complained, I never heard it.

As I took another peek at Lindy, I thought about the superb job Mary Lou was doing with our three daughters. From the very beginning, she had always stressed the importance of loving and respecting one another, as well as other people.

“Remember,” she would say over and over again, “with the exception of the Lord, no one is more important, more of a friend, than your own sisters.”

As a result of that early training, our three girls have grown to be more than loving sisters; they're the best of friends. They were then, and they are today, more than four decades later.

I pulled the car into the driveway, carried Lindy into the house, and headed for her bedroom.

“How did it go tonight?” whispered Mary Lou as she helped me tuck Lindy into bed.

“It went fine, Hon,” I said, “Just fine. First I spoke to 500 sports fans, then learned that some people are made of stronger stuff than others.”

Ignoring the perplexed look on Mary Lou's face, I gently pulled her toward me and gave her a big kiss. □

A professional writer since 1949, Arn was an award-winning freelance writer since 1988 and became a regular contributor to Plain Truth in 1997. Arn passed away this summer at the age of 78. He is survived by his wife, Mary Lou, their three daughters, sons-in-law and eight grandchildren.

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the strong surge of blush soaring up through my body toward my face.

But why?

I knew Lindy was right. There was no way my wife, my shy Mary Lou, would ever stand in front of a big crowd and give a speech. No question about it, my daughter was correct. Some people are just made of stronger stuff than others. Yet, as I glowed over her words of praise, as well as the warm reception of the banquet crowd, I wondered again why Lindy's words had made me blush.

My daughter was now fast asleep, and, for the remainder of that trip home, I had time to reflect on many things.

I remembered meeting Mary Lou in 1949, nearly 17 years earlier, and immediately falling in love with her. She was age 18, I was 21, and I had just realized my lifelong dream of becoming a professional sports writer. I was writing a column for a slick weekly newspaper for the princely sum of \$35 a week. I gladly would have paid the publisher for the privilege of seeing my words and my byline in print.

By the time we were married, a year-and-a-half later, I felt that I

when doctors told us that it was likely we would never have children of our own.

That, too, was a quiet ride home. As we parked the car in the garage, Mary Lou said softly and simply, “I don't believe it! I think God has other plans for us. We are going to have children.”

Within the year we experienced the miracle of birth. Mary Lou, it would seem, had twisted God's arm.

I turned to look at Lindy, still sleeping against my right shoulder, and I thought back to how sickly my young daughter had been in 1962, shortly after her fifth birthday. It had taken many months of testing before doctors diagnosed her case as severe juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. The first two or three years of her illness were particularly difficult because there were times, too many times, when she literally could not move.

As the car made its bumpy way across Valhalla's brick-lined Kensico Dam bridge, I recalled the dismal rain-swept day we had to take Lindy to New York Hospital for testing.

Our second daughter, Stacey, a colicky baby through the early