

History of "Editorial Without Words"



The photo known as the "Editorial Without Words" is probably one of the best recognized symbols of [Shriners Hospitals](#), yet it was taken almost by accident. Randy Dieter, the photographer, recalled that in 1970, he had been on assignment covering the local Shrine Temple's annual outing for handicapped children at the now-defunct Mesker Amusement Park in Evansville, Indiana.

"I was taking shots of the midway and was using my telephoto lens," Dieter said. "I saw a local Shriner walking by carrying a little girl in one hand and her crutches in the other. My camera wouldn't fire.

"Then they were too close for my lens. I ran past them, but the camera jammed. I had to take my last shot as they walked by. It was the end of the roll. If I had to think about it, I wouldn't have come up with something like that. Fate guides you."

"It still seems unreal," said Bobbi Jo Wright, the little girl in the photo. "I have many wonderful memories of the years I was a patient at the St. Louis Shriners Hospital and remember all the fun activities. I was born with cerebral palsy, which resulted in many orthopaedic problems that made walking difficult. I had many surgeries at the St. Louis Hospital. They greatly improved my ability to walk."

Bobbi Jo received her B.A. in English from Anderson University. She is active in her church and teaches Sunday School. "I use a cane when I go shopping," she said. "If I'm walking on grassy areas, I use crutches."

Today, the famous photo has been reproduced on stained-glass windows, mosaics, tie tacs, pins, and in statues. A larger-than-life replica of the "Editorial Without Words" stands outside the International Shrine Headquarters building in Tampa. Photographer Randy Dieter presently serves as graphics editor for the Kentucky Post.

The Shriner who was unexpectedly immortalized carrying Bobbi Jo was Al Hortman, formerly of Evansville and now living in Georgia. At left in the original photo is Hortman's daughter, Laura, who was herself a patient at the Shriners Hospital in St. Louis. After Laura began receiving treatment at Shriners, Hortman joined the Shrine.

