

How Mary and Bob Ended Up as Teachers The Short Version with Five IFs Each

Bob

It was the first day of classes at Stanford Law School in the Fall of 1962. I had paid my tuition, moved into Crothers Hall, the Law School dorm, and then gone to the Stanford Book Store to purchase all the law books on the list the school had given me. The check-out clerk told me I had all the wrong books. She said the ones I had asked her to ring up were for law school students, not for incoming Freshmen. I politely pointed out to her that I was 23 and an actual Stanford graduate who was now ready to begin Law School. She then rang up my books.

A Change of Heart

After dropping my books off at my dorm room, I suddenly (and I mean suddenly) had a change of heart. I decided right then that I would rather teach fifth-grade than become a lawyer. The reason I was dropping out of Law School was because I wanted to be an age-group swimming coach. I decided to become an elementary school teacher because that was the best job for me to have while my age-group swimmers were not available for coaching because they, too, would be in school.

Since this is the short version, the explanation for my quick life-changing decision and why I picked fifth-grade as my teaching destination will have to wait. I immediately dropped out of Law School, went directly to the Stanford School of Education, and asked, "Can I enroll here instead?" I told them I was supposed to start law school that day, but I had decided I would rather be an elementary school teacher. I was accepted on the spot. Why elementary school? Junior high and high school teachers taught subjects. I wanted to teach children.

I then moved out of Crothers Hall and went home to explain to my parents what I had just done. Going home meant traveling the five miles from Stanford to my home in Atherton, a short enough distance that I had bicycled between school and home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter breaks when I was a Freshman.

Those Who Can't, Teach

As I was growing up, the phrase my parents used whenever my brothers and I complained about a teacher was, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." At that time, I shared this low opinion of teachers. In all my years as a student, from kindergarten through high school, there were no teachers that I ever admired. The only teacher whose class I actually looked forward to was my fourth-grade teacher. Not because I thought she was a great teacher but because she told great stories. Her

stories were not related to anything she was teaching us. She was just easily distracted and prone to wander off on story-telling tangents.

Given the fact that teachers were not held in high regard in my family and boasting that your son is in Stanford Law School is a better brag than that he is determined to be a fifth-grade teacher, my parents took my announcement as well as could be expected. They knew it was my choice, so they would accept it. However, my father told me that he just knew I would end up in administration, as a principal or a district superintendent, and never stay a teacher.

To Avoid the Draft

Even though I wanted to start my teacher training immediately, I had to deal with the reality of the situation. This was a time when military service was an obligation for all males over 18. My older brother had been drafted into the Army as soon as he graduated. My military obligation could be postponed as long as I was a student, but once I was done with my education, I would have to enter the service. I had already undergone a pre-induction physical, so being drafted was definitely in my future somewhere.

Since I did not want to receive training as a teacher and then have to spend two or three years in the military before actually putting my training into practice, I decided to get my military obligation out of the way. I contacted the Stanford School of Education and asked them to put my acceptance on hold until I had completed my mandatory service.

Delayed Graduation

I had already delayed my graduation by a year for a reason that will be explained in the longer version of this story. My brother Jack, who was a year behind me at Stanford, was now also a recent graduate. I suggested to him that we sign up together. Our older brother told us that being an Army Private was not the best career choice. So, Jack and I applied to and were accepted by the Naval Officer Candidate School (OCS). The Navy's recruitment slogan then was, "Join the Navy - See the world". That sounded to both of us like way more fun than just sitting at the same military base for a few years as our older brother was doing.

USS Midway CVA-41

After OCS, I was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Midway CVA-41 (now a military museum in San Diego). Jack was assigned to shore duty in Hawaii. We knew brothers could request duty with one another, so our plan was to see where we were sent and then the brother with the worse orders would request duty with the brother with the better orders. We did not know which set of orders was better, so we both went our

separate ways. I was quite content with where I was. Jack, not so much. Within a year, Jack joined me on the Midway.

Cal Instead of Stanford

In 1966, as my military service was ending, I contacted the Stanford School of Education and requested that my acceptance be reactivated. Stanford informed me that it no longer offered any training for prospective elementary school teachers. Stanford suggested that I apply to the University of California at Berkeley (Cal), which was just across the San Francisco Bay from Stanford.

Waiving All Requirements – Except Two

When I applied, I asked if Cal could waive all the requirements for admission to its teacher-training program, since my college major had been economics. Cal's response was that I could apply to be in its Intern Program, which would let me skip the usual year of student teaching, start right off as a regular teacher, and receive a regular teacher's salary for the year. Perfect for me. Better than perfect.

The Intern Program had two requirements for its enrollees:

- 1 - No previous teacher-training experience.
- 2 - Extensive travel outside the USA.

The Purpose of the Program

The Intern Program's purpose was to train teachers specifically for teaching in inner-city schools, where the rate of academic failure was high and so was the rate of teacher-turnover. The philosophy of the Intern Program was, "What is being taught now is not working, so try something different."

By 1966, I Was Not My 1961 Self

I don't know what I would have thought of the "try something different" challenge if I had been accepted to a program like that right out of college, but I was not "right out of college". I was the Class of '61 and this was 1966. I had changed quite a bit during those five years. By 1966, my attitude was, "You want me to find new ways? Bring it on."

What I saw in that "What is being taught now is not working, so try something different" statement was permission to throw out everything already being used and start from scratch. If I had been given this same permission back in 1961, I am sure I would have ended up like all my fellow Intern Teachers, simply presenting the same failing curriculum to my students that the State had adopted for my use.

When I said that all the other Interns ended up teaching no differently than teachers trained in more traditional ways, I meant all but one. Halfway through our intern year, a second teacher also became willing to start from scratch. That second teacher was Mary.

Mary

Mary spent her Freshman year at Arizona State University (ASU) in Phoenix, where she was a Liberal Arts Major who was also focused on learning to speak Russian. Mary's father was a career Army Officer. He was stationed in Phoenix while Mary was in high school and for her Freshman year in college. At the end of her Freshman year, her father retired from the military and moved his family to Sylmar in Southern California, where he had found work as a junior high school math teacher. Since Mary's family was no longer in Arizona, Mary transferred to the College of the Holy Names in Oakland, California, as a Sophomore to join her high school boyfriend there.

Future Librarian

Mary's main interest was in becoming a librarian. A sample of the courses she selected for her liberal arts degree in preparation for her career as a librarian: Introduction to Literature, Literary Criticism, World Classics, and Major British Writers. She also took classes on Shakespeare, Milton and Chaucer, American Literature, History of the English Language, History of Art, American Civil War History, Philosophers of the World, Medieval Philosophers, and Oriental Philosophers.

The only courses Mary took related to children were a Child Development class she took her Freshman year and a methods class on Teaching Art at the Elementary School Level she took in the Spring Semester of her Senior year when she applied to the Internship Program.

Mild Interest

Although Mary's main interest was in becoming a librarian, she became at least mildly interested in becoming a teacher when her father became one. Mary was very close to her father, much more so than her older brother. Mary and her father used to work together on the family car, changing oil and other things like that.

After graduation, Mary's boyfriend left for medical school in Colorado. Mary was looking for something to do to keep her busy and pay the bills while he completed his medical training. Mary had learned of the Intern Program from a friend of hers at Cal. What Mary liked best about the Intern Program was that she could earn a full teacher's salary while earning her credential, which she could then use or not use as she saw fit. Becoming a librarian would still be an option.

Turned Down

Mary did meet the Program's basic requirements. With respect to extensive travel, Mary was an Army brat who had lived new places every two or three years. Born in Many, Louisiana, attended kindergarten in Berlin, Germany, and so on. She also had no educational training. Her application for admission to the program was turned down with no particular reason given. Since Mary had been turned down, after graduation, she joined her family in Southern California and began looking into becoming a librarian.

Replacement Needed

There were 24 Interns present at our Intern's first meeting. Within about a week, however, one of the male Interns quit. Our supervisors saw no need to replace him. Then, a few days later, our supervisors learned that one of the women they had accepted into their program failed to meet the standards for admission as a Cal graduate student. That intern would have to leave the program.

Unlike the Intern who had quit and was not replaced, the second Intern needed a replacement. This Intern was one of four Interns who were to be part of an experiment in team-teaching. These four Interns were to have their salaries for the year paid by a research grant our supervisors had obtained. They were to be paired with four other interns whose salaries were paid by their school districts. The purpose of the experiment was to assess the effectiveness of having two teachers working side-by-side in a classroom instead of just one.

There was no actual waiting list of candidates for the program. None of the rejected applicants were told they would be called if an opening occurred, so none of the candidates who had been turned down were anticipating a call from our supervisors.

At Home That Day

Mary happened to be at home the day the call came. She was offered the vacant position, and she tentatively accepted. Mary knew that one of the Interns who was a friend of hers was sharing a rented house with two other Cal students. Mary called her friend and asked if there was room for a fourth person in that house. The answer was "Yes." With that question answered, Mary fully accepted admission to the Intern Program.

She Would Not Stay That Way

Mary, who had just graduated in 1966, was, of course, as clueless about "trying something different" as I know I would have been in 1961. But she would not stay that way. That is a story for the longer version.

IFs For the Short Version

Bob's Five IFs

IF I had not decided to drop out of law school on the first day of classes to become a fifth-grade teacher,
Then I would be a lawyer now, living a completely different life.
IF I had not decided to delay my entry to the Stanford School of Education until I had completed my military service,
Then I would likely be an age-group swimming coach now, with teaching as my secondary job.
IF Stanford had not stopped the training of elementary school teachers while I was in the Navy,
Then, again, being an elementary school teacher would have been my secondary job while I pursued my age-group swimming coach career.
IF there had not been the Intern Program at Cal with the philosophy "What is being taught now is not working, so try something different,"
Then, as was true if I had earned my teaching credential at Stanford, being an elementary school teacher would have been my secondary job as I pursued my age-group swimming coach career.
IF there had not been a five-year timespan between my graduation and my admission to the Intern Program,
Then I would have been as unprepared to meet the "try something different" challenge proposed by the Intern Program as all the other Interns were.

Mary's Five IFs

IF Mary had not changed colleges to follow her boyfriend,
Then she never would have known of the Intern's Program's existence.
IF Mary's father had not left the Army and taken up teaching,
Then a career as a teacher would not have crossed Mary's mind.
IF Mary had not heard of the Intern Program and its year of full pay while earning a credential,
Then Mary would not have applied to the Program as a more affordable alternative to her plan of becoming a librarian.
IF Cal's Graduate School had not disallowed the admission to the Intern Program of that one Intern,
Then Mary's opportunity to join the Program that had already rejected her initial application would not have existed.
IF Mary had not been home to receive the phone call that day,
Then Mary would never have become a teacher. Mary and I would never have met, and all the many things we accomplished together would never have happened.