

For release, August 2012

To Walk With My Brother

By Evelyn Thornton
as told to Mike Bisceglia

Publication date – August 15, 2012

\$20.00, 208 pgs, softcover, 6" x 9"

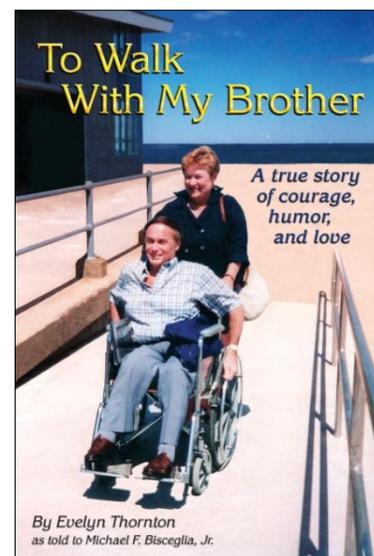
Softcover ISBN# 978-1-937721-02-2

E-book ISBN# 978-1-937721-05-3

Visit <http://www.evelynthorntonbook.com>

- **One family's caring response to a son's physical disability**
- **The bonds of love and faith in a Southern community**
- **Learn about the creation of Hampton Beach, NH's "Shore Patio," a municipal project initiated by Evelyn Thornton, inspired by her brother Wayne's desire to touch the sea.**

Wayne Thornton was six years old in 1953 when a shocking case of medical incompetence during a routine office visit left him a paraplegic for life. From that day forward—in an era long before the Americans with Disabilities Act, access ramps to public buildings, or a national culture that even recognized the potential of the handicapped to participate in civic life—Wayne became an involuntary but willing pioneer in changing our expectations and perceptions of the physically disabled. His eldest sister, Evelyn, shares Wayne's story with love, humor and celebration. She lets us know just what it was like to walk with her brother.



Praise for *To Walk With My Brother*

“Wayne Thornton may have spent most of his life in a wheel chair, but he certainly didn’t sit life out.... Wayne’s outlook on life has, in turn, had a lingering positive effect on his family and community and on many other people he never knew he touched.”

—Walt Grayson, “Look Around Mississippi,” *WLBT-TV, Jackson, Mississippi*

Wayne’s story is one of triumph, of an individual’s unrelenting tenacity to eliminate the physical and attitudinal barriers to a meaningful and complete life.

—Clyde E. Terry, *JD; CEO, Granite State Independent Living*

“A strong pick for inspirational memoir collections”

—*Midwest Book Review*

“Read this book to go along for the ride!”

—*Special Needs Book Review*

About the Authors

Evelyn Thornton grew up in the rural community of Carthage, Mississippi. For thirty-eight and a half years, she served as a stewardess/flight attendant for US Airways. Evelyn lives in Hampton, New Hampshire, only a mile from the “Shore Patio” she and Wayne helped to create.

Michael F. Bisceglia, Jr., is a former educator with over twenty-five years of experience in the fields of teaching and school administration. His last six years were spent teaching children with diverse disabilities. Retired from the world of education, Mr. Bisceglia writes for New England newspapers and magazines. He lives with his wife in Hampton, New Hampshire.

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Q & A with the author - Evelyn Thornton

1. How did you decide to share your family's story?

It began with encouragement from friends and those who had met Wayne. People would say they couldn't believe all the things he did: driving, running his business. So many friends in my age group are now caretakers. GI's now coming back from the wars have also led to a new group of people who are suddenly caretakers. I wanted to share the story for them.

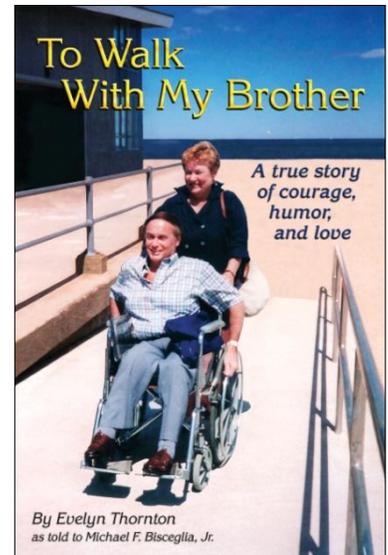
2. How has the public's perception of the handicapped changed since 1953, the year of Wayne's accident?

It's changed a lot! Wayne would go into a store and the children, even the bigger ones, had never seen anyone in a wheelchair and they would stare and point at him. In our hometown of Carthage, Mississippi, when Wayne would go to the dentist office, he would have to circle the block to find a way onto the sidewalk.

When Wayne started traveling to New Hampshire in 1978, the airlines hadn't trained the customer service people on how to treat the handicapped. Going to the ticket counter, I would sometimes walk away crying because Wayne was the one who was flying but the agent would talk to me—I had to walk away so they would HAVE to come around the counter to talk to him. And of course the schools had no handicapped accessible buildings.

3. What special challenges or special advantages did small-town, southern culture create for your brother and family?

Any small community is close knit. Hampton [New Hampshire] is the same way. Of course, the South has something to do with it. It is a different culture. Everybody back then looked after each other. The neighbors came, they brought food. People didn't even knock when they came over; they just walked in.



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4. How do you see Wayne's and your father's their relationship?

He was never separate from my dad. He spent summers as a child working in dad's store. Dad's business was right there, so Wayne was always in the store, seeing the role model of my dad's work, which influenced him through his whole life.

5. Wayne always seems to have been driven to "give back" to friends, family, and the less fortunate.

Your priorities are different if you've never had anything bad happen to you. Wayne always wanted to help the less fortunate. I went through his checkbooks after he died, and he had given to so many causes we'd never known about—children and wounded soldiers.

6. The Leake County Cerebral Palsy Foundation helped bring together the Rotary Club and Southern Bell to install a phone line between the Thornton home and the local elementary school. This may have been the first "distance learning" course in America!

It certainly was the first in Mississippi. I don't know about anywhere else. The telephone system was a matter of the businesses being part of the community. When there's a personal relationship you get more response.

7. You've led quite an adventurous life yourself—traveling the world, working with foster children, surviving a harrowing hijacking event. Do you feel Wayne's physical limitations had any influence on your choices in life?

To see him even as a child in that wheelchair, and to see his attitude of never giving up, always a smile on his face, affected all of us. Wayne taught me, it's human nature to be kind. During my whole career as a flight attendant, whenever I had unpleasant passengers, I loved getting them to "come around" and be kind. I loved it. Kindness is infectious.

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