

# DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE GOOD VISION?

BY THE TIME he was eight, we were resigned to the fact our Paul was different. He was always off by himself reading. As one of the neighbors aptly put it, "Paul's a loner, isn't he?"

Even his reading was different. "Paul, do you have to read with your nose on the page?" I would ask. And at other times when his habit of blinking became too pronounced, I would order him to put down the book and rest his eyes.

His clumsiness became a joke around the house. But I didn't smile over his dawdling, poor posture, toeing-in, and his habit of watching the ground when he walked.

Paul was born after a long and difficult labor. Later the doctor told me that his nervous system had suffered because of the delivery. "You have a very tense little baby," he said, "but in time, he'll grow out of it."

During his first four years, I had been very conscious of Paul's tenseness. This was unfortunate because we never thoroughly investigated possible physical causes behind Paul's problems.

Then, one October afternoon when Paul was in third grade, he brought home an arithmetic paper. All the examples were checked as incorrect, and Paul had an "F" as his grade. I began to scold Paul as I looked at the examples. Then I stopped. Every one of his answers was correct!

I asked the teacher for an explanation. "Paul will have to stop being careless," she said. "Every example was copied incorrectly from the board."

If Paul is careless, he deserves the "F," I thought, but then I remembered something from my own youth. I was shopping downtown with my mother when she looked across the street and said, "There's a good movie playing at the Strand."

"Oh, really, what is it?" I asked.

"Can't you see for yourself?" asked mother.

I couldn't even see the big letters that spelled STRAND, let alone the name on the marquee! And that's how we learned I was nearsighted when I was 13.

inherited nearsightedness from both parental sides, was extremely nearsighted and had severe astigmatism. Paul had to concentrate so hard to keep his eyes focused, it consumed most of his energy. "When he gets his first pair of glasses, Mrs. Bosco, Paul is going to see the world for the first time," the doctor said. "He'll be a different little boy."

Now, two years later, the doctor's wonderful words have proved prophetic. Paul is not the same boy at all. Within a few weeks after he began wearing glasses, his tensions subsided. He began to speed up in schoolwork. His nose stopped touching the book when he read. His posture improved, and he stopped looking at the ground when walking. As a cause for special happiness, we watched him begin to play with the other boys and develop a love for sports.

UNFORTUNATELY, there are many children suffering from unrecognized vision difficulties, just as Paul did. And there are ways in which parents can tell whether their preschool child has poor vision. Since my own experience, I have learned that you should have your young child's eyes checked if you answer yes to some of the following questions:

Does your child bring objects or books close to his eyes?

- Does he stumble over small objects?
- Does he tend to overreach or underreach?
- Does he get carsick?
- Does he blink frequently?
- Does he rub his eyes often?
- Does he squint?
- Are his eyes extremely sensitive to light?
- Does he frown frequently?
- Does he complain of headaches?
- Does he avoid visual activities?

Fortunately, most vision defects in children can be corrected with glasses. This year, Paul's teacher didn't tell me about a quiet boy with an "emotional" problem. Instead, she said, "You have a very talented little boy, Mrs. Bosco. You should be very proud of him."

A pair of glasses made the difference.

By ANTOINETTE BOSCO

I turned to Paul anxiously. "Paul, do you have any difficulty reading what's on the blackboard?"

"Sure, Mom. I have to take my chances guessing at what's there."

I called our family doctor. He told me to see an ophthalmologist immediately.

(An ophthalmologist, by the way, is a physician who specializes in the treatment of diseases and abnormalities of the eye. An optometrist is a specialist in diagnosing vision defects such as nearsightedness and farsightedness; he is trained to fit glasses and recognize eye diseases which require medical attention. An optician makes glasses from prescriptions sent him from ophthalmologists and optometrists.)

The ophthalmologist told me that Paul, having

Before you answer, read this story about a boy's "emotional" problem and its unexpected solution

## COVER:

Winter wouldn't be the same without some fearless skier pitting his form against a majestic slope. Jim Pond caught one descending Mt. Mansfield in Stowe, Vermont.

Family  
Weekly

January 20, 1963

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