

# FACE TRIALS

## ONE OF PORTER'S FAVORITE SCRIPTURES

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:10). "I always like the scriptures that say to have no fear and that He'll strengthen us when we're weak, because I feel like He's done that with me quite a bit. I always lean on Him, and then He helps me out."

# WITH SMILES

*That's the advice from a young man who knows a lot about overcoming obstacles.*

BY DAVID A. EDWARDS  
Church Magazines

**W**hen Porter Ellett of Loa, Utah, sets his mind to something, he usually accomplishes it—whether it's perfecting his curveball, reading the Book of Mormon all the way through, or even doing something as daunting as learning to tie his shoes.

Tying shoes? Well, try doing it one-handed.

You see, when Porter was four years old, he was in an auto accident and lost the use of his right arm. Eventually it was surgically removed. But he hasn't let that slow him down.

His athletic feats are impressive: He was most valuable player for Utah Division 1A baseball; he was a member of the state championship baseball team and his school's basketball and track teams, including the first-place squad in the 4x400-meter relay; and he completed a mini-triathlon.

He has also received his Eagle Scout award, and in the summer he works as a lifeguard.

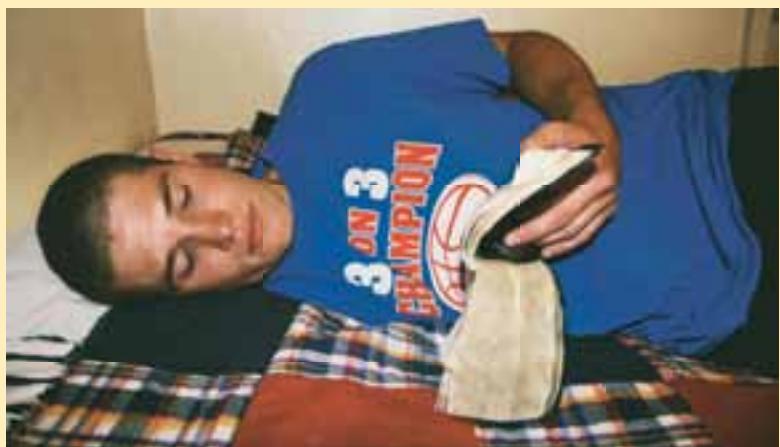
Although having only one arm may make his accomplishments seem all the more extraordinary, Porter just shrugs it off.

"Sometimes I wonder if having two arms would be confusing," he says. "To me, it's just weird to comprehend that—moving two at the same time. It would just be kind of awkward."

His friends treat him as though he were no different from anyone else, and that suits him just fine.

"My friends forget all the time," he says. "They'll ask me to do something, and I'll say, 'You've got to have two hands to do

**P**orter Ellett places his trust in the Lord and doesn't let having one arm slow him down.





**P**orter plays several sports, including basketball, baseball, and track.

that.' It's a compliment, kind of. I think it's neat."

Of course, it took a great deal of patience, practice, and determination for Porter to get where he is now. "When I was younger," he says, "I just wanted to be even with everyone else or better. I didn't want to be the kid who was picked last."

His drive to excel was magnified by the fact that he had to overcome unusual obstacles, like learning to tie those shoes.

"That took forever," he says. "I didn't tie my shoes until I was about 10. I'd just walk up to people and say, 'Will you tie my shoe?' Now I can do it pretty easily."

Of course, his parents offered him an incentive. They told him that if he wanted the new pair of sneakers he was so eager to get, he would have to learn to tie them. So, though it wasn't easy, he did it.

Porter is grateful that his parents weren't easy on him. "They wouldn't always just help me when I felt like I couldn't do something," he says. "I eventually had to do it myself. That's better than anything."

His parents didn't let him off the hook with chores, either. And when your family runs a sheep farm, that means lots of hard

work, including moving large sprinkler pipes in the alfalfa fields, feeding the sheep, and helping out during lambing season.

"The first time I moved pipe," he says, "I got so tired I thought I was going to faint. I got halfway through and just set the pipe down and laid down in the middle of the field. My back was sore for a week, but I was OK from then on."

Another thing he has learned to do by himself is to gain a testimony of the gospel.

"Some people live off what other people believe," he says, "but you have to find out for yourself. The feeling you get when you study and pray—there's no way you could deny it, really. You can't change what you felt. It's built upon solid teachings and solid feelings."

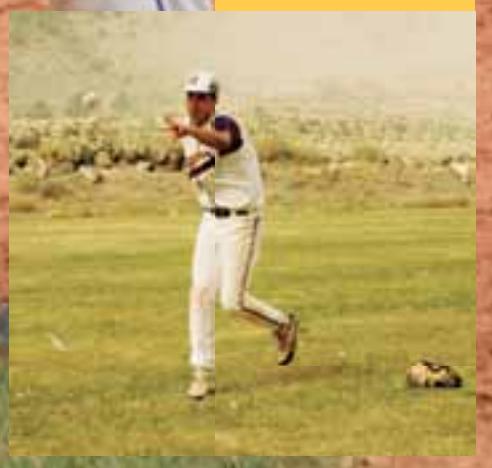
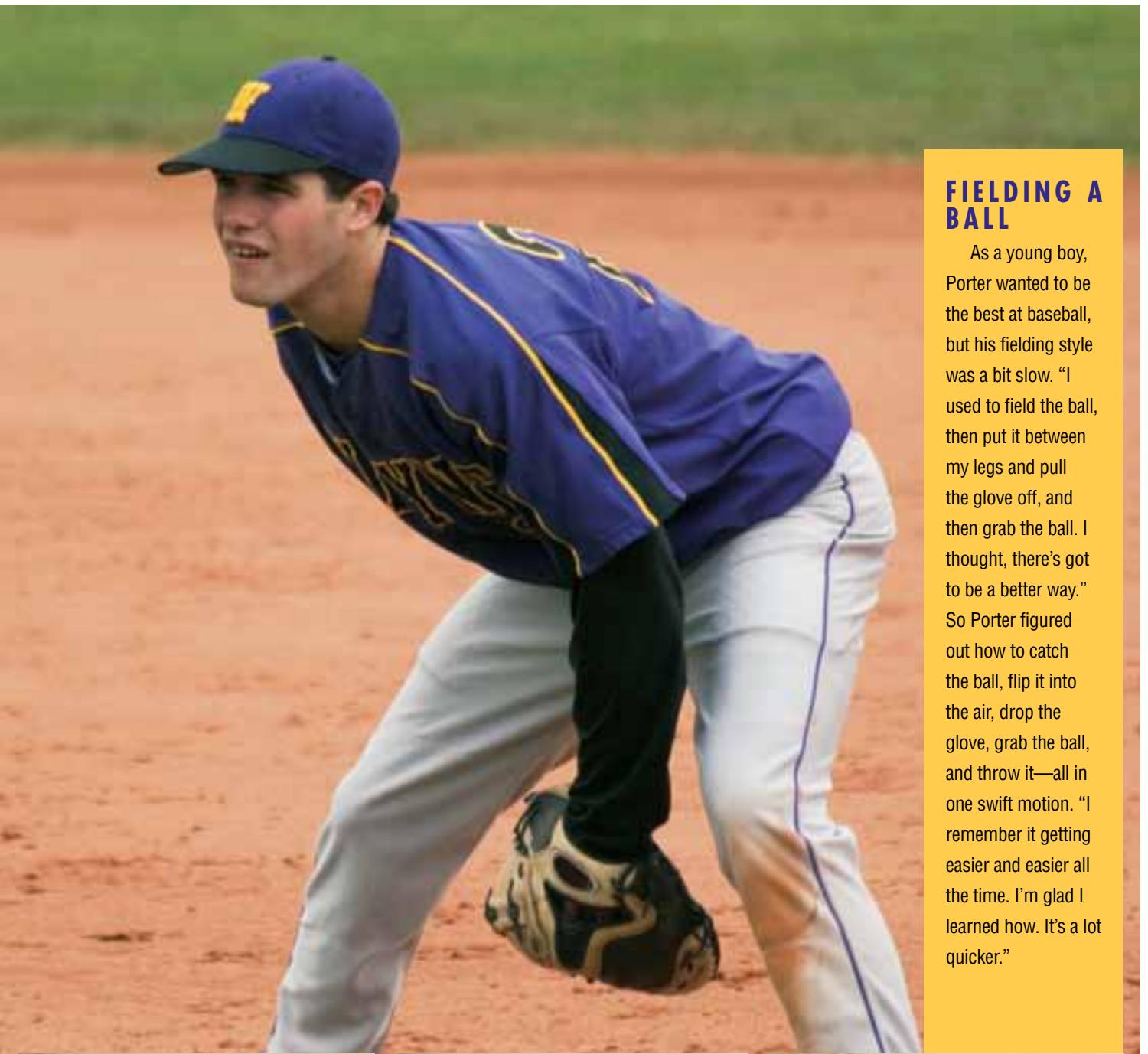
As with his other goals, Porter has shown determination in reading the scriptures. "When I first started reading the Book of Mormon a few years ago, I'd get most of the way through it, but then I'd stop," says Porter. "But the last couple of times I actually read the whole thing, and it's amazing how it all fits together—how everything is part of God's plan."

To Porter, the central message of the



## FIELDING A BALL

As a young boy, Porter wanted to be the best at baseball, but his fielding style was a bit slow. "I used to field the ball, then put it between my legs and pull the glove off, and then grab the ball. I thought, there's got to be a better way." So Porter figured out how to catch the ball, flip it into the air, drop the glove, grab the ball, and throw it—all in one swift motion. "I remember it getting easier and easier all the time. I'm glad I learned how. It's a lot quicker."



**P**orter's family has always supported him and set high standards for him. Porter has five sisters, whom he loves a great deal. He says his older sisters, Sarah, Nancy, and Monique, left a legacy for him to follow because they were exceptional students, athletes, and overall examples. "They go on and do great stuff," Porter says, "so there's not much you can do but follow up. You can't let down. None of the kids around school will ask me to do anything bad, because they know I'll say no, just because all my sisters were so good."

Book of Mormon is "that Jesus Christ came and atoned for us and that God cares for all His children. He looks out for us and watches over us, especially when we search Him out."

His own experience has taught him these lessons as well. "Some of the things that I've been through—I know that there's no way I could do it alone," he says. "I can't do anything without God."

Porter plans to continue relying on God when he serves a full-time mission. "I plan on just being a tool in the Lord's hands," he says. "When I go on a mission, I just want to let the Spirit teach. What better way is there to teach? The Spirit can do much more than I ever could."

Although he's endured many trials, Porter says his biggest challenge has been simply accepting that he's different.

"I don't know if you could call it a gift—losing an arm. But when you're different, why would you try to change it? I see it as a blessing, almost. I wonder if sometimes God allows others to see you overcome your weaknesses so that your example can help make them stronger. I think that people see me and what I've gone through and how it doesn't hold me back, and it



## PORTER ON DATING

"Sometimes I'll just look at a girl, and I can tell if my arm bugs her or not. There are girls who are scared of me, and there are girls who want to talk to me just because I have one arm and because they want to be different. No offense, but those are the two kinds of girls I don't want to hang out with too much. But the girls who just don't even see it—that's cool."

Porter says a sense of humor helps too. For instance, he once gave a girl a rather creative invitation to a dance: he took his prosthetic arm (which he doesn't wear much because "it feels like wearing a toy") and delivered it to the girl's house, attaching a note that said "I'd give my right arm to go to the dance with you." Luckily for Porter, she said yes.

inspires and strengthens them."

Also, because of who he is and what he's accomplished, Porter recognizes that he sets an example.

"Whether I want to or not, I'll be an example to others," he says. "I pray for strength that I can be a light to those around me."

So what's his advice to people who want to learn something from him?

"Tackle your biggest trials with your biggest smiles," says Porter. "Do everything happy. When I'm happy and I'm enjoying what I'm doing, I do better at it. No matter how rough the road gets, you can always make it a happy situation. Just put it in the Lord's hands, and then do everything you can." **NE**



## FEED MY SHEEP

Porter feels that working with sheep gives him an understanding of the scriptures. "It reminds me of how Christ is the Shepherd of His flock. When you're working, you just think about it, and you're the one that makes it possible for them to live, kind of how God makes it possible for us to live."

In addition, Porter feels that working with sheep has given him another insight. "Now I understand how frustrated God probably gets with us sometimes."

