

Allie's Stories



Saxton, PA

After he died, it was determined that probably the best thing for my mother and the three of us kids to do would be to move to Saxton and share the home of my father's mother, Mary Sweet Eichelberger. She had a large home, her six children were grown and gone, it was a nice small home town, she was getting elderly and would require some care, my mother was in a caring profession, we needed a home, there was very little life insurance, and it became the proper thing to do. So we moved to Saxton, Pennsylvania, and I went from the suburbs of Philadelphia to a quiet, gentle, small town in Central Pennsylvania where my dad had grown up. It was different. It was a very different environment. I think one of the first things I noticed was it was a very informal setting. For example, in Merion I always called my neighbors Mr. this and Mrs. that. But in Saxton people all seemed to be known by their first name.

On one side of me lived Bob and Beulah Huff, and on the other side of me lived Harry and Lena Eichelberger. So that the people on my street, no matter how elderly they were, were very accepting of being called by their first names. This informality was pretty nice. It also suggested to me, though, as a kid growing up in that town, that those people were going to know who I was, and if I misbehaved or I did things wrong they were going to know that it was Allie Eichelberger who did this or did that. But Saxton was a pretty nifty place to be. At age eight I was going to start the third grade and go to school there in a town that was absolutely entirely different than anything I'd ever known before. For example, there were a lot of new kids I had to meet, and some of these kids were pretty rough kids by my standards. They weren't very polished. They weren't what you'd call suburban kids. They were rough and tumbled, they wrestled, they boxed, they ran a lot, they jumped a lot, they were physically active, their parents didn't take them to the library, but rather they'd turn the kids out into the yard and let them run and jump and carry on.

And so I had to learn to be pretty scrappy as a kid growing up. That was OK with me...I didn't mind. I was willing to play their game and, you know, run through the neighborhood with the other ones. There were some advantages to being an Eichelberger. Across the street from the house where I grew up was the Eichelberger Store, which is still there today. That store had begun existence in 1864 when my great-grandfather, Captain Eli Eichelberger, returned from the Civil War and started in the business selling hardware and groceries on the lower main street of Saxton. And that store

has remained in the family every since. It was called for over 100 years E. Eichelberger and Son, and I think now it is officially just known as the Eichelberger Store. But you know, having a store named after you or named after your relatives sort of gave you a sense of prestige in the community. Not that that is what I was looking for at age eight, but it was one of the things that happened.

Saxton was an unusual town. There were a lot of unique people, and there were a lot of unique situations around. I mentioned old folks, and there were many old folks around Saxton. On one side of my house there was a fella named Harry Eichelberger who lived there, and I thought it was interesting he had the same last name as I. Harry Eichelberger was quite an eccentric. He owned a store in the center of town. The store appeared to have never been painted. It appeared to have no customers. It appeared to have never been cleaned. Yet Harry Eichelberger every morning got up, dressed, and went up and opened the store. He would sit up there at the store throughout the day, smoke several cigars, he might have a customer, I don't remember and don't know, I never saw anyone go in and out. In the evening he would lock the door and walk home.

I thought of Harry Eichelberger as a bit of an eccentric. Up behind his house there was a large garage, and in his garage there was a 1928 or 1929 Chevrolet car parked in there. This was 15 years later when I was living next door, and that car still had a canvas cover over the spare tire, which was mounted on the back of the car, and the spare tire cover said Everett Motor Works. That car remained with Harry from the time he bought it in the 1920s until one day in 1954 he finally traded it in on a new Chevrolet. But it was not uncommon to see Harry on a Sunday back that car out of the driveway, warm it up, come around front, and put his wife, Lena, in the front seat with him and off they would go for a Sunday drive, usually over the mountain to Altoona or down the highway to Huntingdon, or up the road to Bedford. But that's how Harry was. He let his grass grow high. He looked like he didn't change his clothes very often. He wasn't a sociable guy. I might say hello to him and he might answer and he might not. But he and his wife Lena lived very much to themselves and, consequently, I thought of them as somewhat eccentric.

Saxton had its share of doctors, stores, and shops, and different businesses. Some of them that I recall that were there when I was a kid was the Sugar Bowl. Now the Sugar Bowl was not really a sugar bowl, but it was a bar room or a tavern on the main street of Saxton operated by a man named

Babe Dixon. When the men went into Babe's to drink, all the women in town thought that was just disgusting because they were sure that when the men came out of Babe's Sugar Bowl they were going to have too much to drink and be problems when they got home. I never thought badly of the Sugar Bowl, I never went in it, but Babe's son was Tony Dixon, and Tony was a friend of mine. Tony had the pony that I told Verne about named Dolly. Tony was not a very smart student, and he struggled in school. He would often call on me to help him with his homework. In fact, his mother would call on me to help Tony with his homework because Tony's inability to do schoolwork became an embarrassment to the family. I can't think of Mrs. Dixon's first name, but she would say, "Allie, if you help Tony with his school work, I'm sure Tony will let you ride Dolly."

Well, I would do the homework, and then Tony and I would go behind his house, behind the Sugar Bowl, and get Dolly out of her pen, and I'd get to ride Dolly around the yard for 10-15 minutes, which to me was a big thrill. Dolly was a pony, which is a small horse, and Tony Dixon had a saddle that was just made for a kid on a small horse, and he had feed, straw and water, and Tony wore cowboy boots. I always thought that Tony lived a pretty good life because his mother and daddy gave him this pony, cowboy boots, saddles, and a lot of things like that. I didn't realize at the time that Tony's mother and father spent so much time working at the Sugar Bowl they were probably buying Tony's love through this pony rather than spending time with him. But, anyhow, it was a great thrill to do up to Dixon's and get to ride Dolly, even if I had to do Tony's homework to earn that right.

There was another old business in town. It was the Billy Slider's Photo Shop. Billy Slider...I don't know if I ever saw him...he was dead or gone or something like that. But in the building where he had had a photo shop, the building had never been painted, and Billy was gone, the windows were all broken out of this building. As a kid I would go up with some of my friends and we would crawl through these broken windows and get inside this photo shop, where there were boxes and boxes of photographs all over the floor. We never realized at the time they might have had value to somebody, they might have belonged to somebody, maybe somebody had bought the rights to them, and we would pull out a box of photos and look at them and laugh and giggle and toss them around. After a year or so of this, Billy Slider's Photo Shop began to look like a junk yard. There were photographs tossed hither and yon, and it was really sad that they were never properly mark and categorized in a way that would have been useful.

Billy had been the town photographer and I am certain he had pictures in there that would have been very interesting to historians, and he maybe would have had some of my relatives in there that I didn't recognize. But Billy Slider had a photo shop up on Church Street.

Another place of business that I would drop in was Tony Angelo's Shoe Repair. Now if anyone in the family needed shoes fixed—in fact, if anyone in the family needed any errands run—it always seemed to fall on Allie, the youngest kid, to go run the errands. Frankly, I didn't mind because that gave me the right to go away from home. It meant that I could leave and come back an hour or two later and nobody had any reason to question me. Tony Angelo's Shoe Shop was a store down on Lower Main Street in Saxton near the theatre building, and Tony was an Italian immigrant who had come to America. He was crippled. He walked with one leg much shorter than the other. When he walked, he dipped to one side. He would sort of bob up and down when he walked behind the counter. Tony's shop smelled so good. It was all those waxes and glues and adhesives and the different materials that he used to repair and fix shoes. I always enjoyed taking a pair of shoes or picking up a pair of shoes at Tony Angelo's Shoe Repair and maybe spend an hour in there just watching him work or talk to him when he worked. He had a tall chair that you could sit in with two big iron posts that set up that you could put your feet up and get a shoe shine, but in Saxton people didn't get their shoes shined because it was too poor a town.

But, anyhow, I could climb up in that chair and I could talk to Tony and find out what was going on in the world. I can remember being at Tony Angelo's Shoe Repair Shop back in April of 1945, and it was after the war—no it was just before World War II was ended—and I took something over or I was picking up something and I went in the shop and Tony was crying. I jumped up in the high chair and I said, "Tony, what's wrong?". He said to me, "The Mr. President died." And I said, "The Mr. President?", and he said, "President Roosevelt died. Didn't you know?", and I said, "No." He said, "It was on the radio...the President died." He said, "What will become of our country?" It was obvious that he was very distraught that the President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, who had been President for over 12 years, had died in Warm Springs, Georgia. To Tony Angelo and to many Americans it was like a passing of the greatest man they could imagine.

Some of the other businesses around Saxton was Woody Cornelious, who had like a hot dog/hamburger stand. Woody had some of the coldest root beer in Saxton. If I was going to mow the grass or do any hard work, I always liked to have a couple of nickels in my pocket so when I was finished I could go over to Woody's and get a cold root beer. And what he did, he would take his root beer mugs, and after he washed them, he would rinse them in water and put them promptly in a freezer, and then when a customer came in and said, "Woody, give me a cold root beer," he would reach in the freezer and pull out an icy mug, fill it with root beer, and sit it on the counter in front of you. For a nickel you had one of the most delicious, cold drinks in town.

The town also was a stopping off point for a railroad, and this was called the Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Rail Road, H&BTMRR. We kids jokingly referred to H&BTMRR by saying that meant "hobos and bums take many rough rides". The freight station ticket office, round house, and repair shop were pretty busy places, and it employed a lot of men, which was good for the small town economy. The round house was an interesting building. It was a big, half moon building that was made of stone, big stone. What it meant by round house was that it was round like half a moon, and when they brought in a train or an engine or a car or a caboose that needed repaired, the car would be pulled onto what was called a turntable.

A turntable was like a big bridge with a greasy spindle in the middle. The train would roll up on the track one car. Let's say it's the engine. The engine would roll up onto this big, greasy spindle bridge, stop in the middle of it, and then what they could do was the men got out of the engine, they'd get off, and they'd all get a hold of that bridge and they would turn it. It would be like turning the hands on a clock. They would turn it until they could back it in directly into whichever slot or vacant area in the round house that was available to work on. Then that way, using the turntable, they could put different cars in different slots, in this round house, or garage, for repairs. I would say that the round house might hold 5-6 different cars. But because you couldn't just back them in like an automobile, they would pull them up onto the turntable, get out, and then men would get a hold of this—there would be like a handle sticking out, like a big wooden handle—and the men would all lean against it and start to turn it until they would turn that turntable around and stop it in front of one of the doors, line up the tracks, start the engine, and back it right into the garage where they had to do their work. It was real tricky.

Well, what would happen is, when the men went home from work, my friends and I would go up and we would want to turn the turntable, you know, to see if we were as strong as the men that did that during the daytime when the work was being done. So it was not uncommon for 8 or 10 of us guys to go up when we were 9, 10, 11 years old and grab hold of that great big wooden bar on the turntable and start pushing and heaving. Of course, with no train on it, it really didn't take too much effort to turn that thing. We'd push it 8, 10, 12, 15 feet and then we'd stop, and then we'd laugh and leave. But the problem was, when the men came back to work the next day and they wanted to line it up with the tracks to bring a car in or bring a car out, then it was up to them to realign it before they pushed a car off in the wrong direction. So the poor guys working up there had to check and make sure that some of the young boys in town hadn't misaligned the turntable up at the round house. But those were some of the things we did when we were kids.

Outside of town, there were some diners and restaurants, and inside of town there were some diners and restaurants. One of the ones outside of town was a place out in East Saxton, near Hennessey's Market, where there was a guy who had a diner that was made of a railroad car. I don't know where he got the railroad car, but he pulled it up on a piece of ground out there and he set up business. His name was Gut Reed. Now why they called him Gut Reed I don't know, but Gut was sort of a tall, skinny guy that had a little beer belly sticking out in the front. Gut Reed had a diner out there that probably never was gonna prosper. In fact, business got so desperate at one time I remember he put a sign out front that said, "Stop here and eat or we'll both starve." I don't know where he got the idea, but three months after he put the sign up, somebody wrote to Reader's Digest and told him about Reed's Diner having that sign out front, and Reader's Digest published it in there as one of the funniest things that had been reported to them that year.

One of the other restaurants was Poker Weaver's. Now Poker's real name was Warren Weaver, but he was called Poker because he liked to play cards so much. Poker Weaver had a restaurant, and it wasn't much of a restaurant, but for some reason in small towns restaurants seemed to be the place where people would gather in the morning and get bacon, eggs and coffee, or they'd come for lunch for a sandwich and a milkshake, so Saxton always seemed to have several different restaurants open at any one time.

I'll tell you about some of the friends that I played with when I was a kid. One of my favorites was Ronnie Barnett. Ronnie Barnett was one of four children—it was Ronnie, Phil, Natalie, and Eileen. Ronnie was the younger of the two boys. He was two years older than I, pretty strong physically, and bigger than I. I always liked being around Ronnie because he was a nice guy and he was always fair and never let the little kids get beat up. Ronnie's father was Bill Barnett, and Bill Barnett owned a family business that had been in Saxton for 100 years that was a NE-HI bottling company. It was called Barnett's Pop Shop, but they made NE-HI soft drink. All of their pop, or soft drink, was bottled in I think 10 ounce bottles, clear bottles, and they had soft drink in orange flavor, cherry flavor, root beer, grape, birch beer, cream soda, and maybe there was another flavor, too, like raspberry or something like that. I know that Bill Barnett, Ronnie's father, worked very, very hard to keep the business going. I'd go over to Barnett's and, if Ronnie had to work, I'd try to help him work because then it meant that maybe he would be free to go out and play earlier in the day than otherwise. We would work over there, and most of the work we did would be taking cases of pop—now this is 24 bottles of pop in a full box—and stacking them, maybe on the truck or one part of the floor or somewhere, and it would be hard work, it was heavy work. When I was 10, 11, 12, 13 years old that kind of work was not easy for me, but I'd help Ronnie with it. He was older than I and that's why he had muscles, I guess, from all the stuff he did.

The way they got the pop was they would check it and—of course, they made it out of sugar at that time—they would check it to make sure it was good clean pop by holding the bottles upside down, pulling them out of the case and holding them upside down four at a time in front of a big magnifying glass with a light bulb behind it. If there was any visible dirt floating in the pop, that was called dirty pop and they'd put that in another case and they'd just send it off to be dumped out. Now maybe that dirt would come from a cigarette butt that someone left in an empty bottle or a leaf or something like that that just got into the empty bottles. When they brought the empty bottles back to the factory, they washed them in a hot, steamy, soapy solution and tried to clean them and purify them as well as they could because they were gonna refill them with new pop.

Well, one of the rewards of working down at Barnett's, because he didn't get paid for it, was that we got to drink the dirty pop. Now there was particles floating in the dirty pop, and probably the only way to keep from swallowing that stuff whenever you were drinking it we found to be was to put

that bottle of pop up against your t-shirt and then drink the pop, straining it through your t-shirt. So we'd take a bottle of dirty pop, take the lid off, put a t-shirt over the top of the bottle, and then lift it up to our mouths and drink the pop until we were down to about an ounce of pop and some pieces of dirt, and then pour it out.

Well, that worked OK, and Mr. Barnett, Bill Barnett, he didn't mind, as long as we helped down there at the store a little bit and helped move some cases around and didn't get in his way, didn't bother him too much. The only thing was, when I'd get home at night, my mother would look at my t-shirt and she saw a red ring and an orange ring and a green ring, and she knew that I'd had three bottles of pop—cherry, orange, and lemon lime. Of course, she would say to me, "Allie, didn't you drink an awful lot of pop over at Barnett's today?" and I would acknowledge that I did. I realize the only way I could fool her was that I had to drink the same flavors all of the time and use the same spot on my shirt, so I would drink a cherry, and then I'd drink a cream soda which was also red colored, and then I'd drink another cherry, and I'd hold it all at the same spot so it'd look like I only drank one bottle of pop, even though I had three. But you know as you grow up you try to find ways to fool your mother, and that was one of the few ways I could fool my mother.

Down the street a little bit from where Tony Dixon lived there was a businessman that always fascinated me. His name was Lawrence Whippo, and Mr. Whippo was Saxton's blacksmith. That's hard to believe that in the 1940's there was still somebody around that worked as a blacksmith or a "Smithy" as they were called, but Mr. Whippo worked as a blacksmith. He had a shed that was probably twice as big as the living room of your house or maybe three times as big as your living room, and inside he had a pile of coal and he'd have different kinds of iron material laying around in a pile, straps and strips and chunks of iron, and he had a thing that would hold a fire, it was made out of brick, and he would build a fire in that, and he could bank it over night and then fire it up in the morning.

There was a bellows to make the fire very hot to make the iron or steel hot, and an anvil, which he hammered the iron and steel on. He would fashion things for people. So, let's say a farmer had a big hinge on his gate at the farm and the hinge broke, the farmer would take it off and bring it to Mr. Whippo, and he would heat the two pieces and hammer them together and get them to work together, and fix it, like it adheres itself one part to the other, and then maybe charge the man 50 cents or \$1.00, and the farmer would take the repaired hinge back and put it

on his gate. That's how Mr. Whippo made his living-fixing things, he put shoes on horses, but most of the time he just seemed to be making or repairing iron and metal pieces. It was always fun to go up there and watch Mr. Whippo work. Probably the only time I never really enjoyed it was when it was terribly hot in the summer time because the inside of his blacksmith shop became very hot on the inside and it wasn't a comfortable place to be on a hot day.

A comfortable place to be on a hot day was a place down by the river we called Soapy Beach. It was a swimming hole. It was right on the Raystown River, and it was across from an old farm called the Shultz Farm. We would go down to Soapy Beach. They had like a sandy soil on the beach and stones. Boy, when you first went down in the springtime you thought your feet would never get used to walking on the stones and the stubbles of grass, but by the time the middle of summer came your feet got used to it and the water was warmer and it was more fun splashing and romping around down there. So, that was always a great place to go on a hot day. We were never too cognizant of what made Soapy Beach soapy. There was always something sort of frothy floating on the water. I guess by the time I got big enough to find out what it was it happened to be that there was a sewage discharge not too far upstream, and so some of those bubbles were probably not very healthy things for us to be swimming in.

For some reason, our parents weren't aware of it and our bodies built up a certain amount of immunity to it and apparently we all lived, for awhile anyhow. But Soapy was a great place to go. Of course the girls never went there, that was all for boys. So it was not uncommon for a guy to go down there and go for a swim, even if he didn't have a bathing suit, he just took off all of his clothes and went swimming with nothing on. Soapy Beach also got the nickname of Bare Ass Beach because sometimes the kids didn't wear suits. But we never told our parents that. We just called it Soapy—"We're going to Soapy". We'd swim down there probably 3-4 times a week, whenever we'd just want to go for a swim for an hour or something like that. It was free, it was within a mile of the house, and you always could run into a couple of guys you knew. Hopefully they weren't big guys that were gonna chase you off or hurt you. By and large, we had good times down there. A real thrill was to see who was big enough to swim clear across the river from Soapy Beach to Shultz's farm, and that seemed like an enormous distance. Well, by the time I was probably 10 or 11, I could swim across that river and turn around and swim back without ever getting up on the bank to rest. I thought that was pretty big stuff. I thought, "Man, this is great! I

can swim across the river and back without stopping." And I thought I was pretty big stuff when I was 11 years old.

One of my friends was Bobby Scarcia - we called him Bobby Shark. Bobby was three years older than me, and I'll never forget the day he dove in the water on Soapy side, swam under water to the middle of the river, came up, took a breath, went down, and the next time he came up he was over at the Shultz farm. I was just flabbergasted! Here was a guy who had swam clear across the river and only came up once for air...he had done it under water. How remarkable that seemed to me. When I was proud of swimming across the river on top, Bobby could go across under water with only one gulp of fresh air. But those were things you did when you were a kid. You always admired the guy that could do more than you, and then that made me try harder to do some of the things that Bobby Shark and Ronnie Barnett and some of the other guys did. So there was always more to learn, there was always another challenge or bridge to cross, and that was pretty much good times.

Another business in Saxton was a pool hall down the street from where I lived. It was run by a guy named Hayes Morningstar, and Hayes was a man probably—well, he had a son my age—but he looked like one of the world's oldest men. He was bald-headed, he was funny looking, he had one eye, he chewed tobacco, and I never understood how a man could run a business and make a living letting people shoot pool on one or two tables in his pool hall at 10 cents a game, selling candy bars, soft drinks, and cigarettes, but Hayes ran a pool hall down there. And although I don't think he liked young kids hanging around, he didn't discourage us because we would stop and buy a popsicle or a candy bar or something like that from time to time.

On a slow day, if we wanted to come in and put down a dime and play a game of pool, as long as we didn't act too silly, he let us do it. I can remember sitting down there on a tall stool when I was a boy, watching Hayes shoot pool with maybe one of his better customers. As I say, Hayes was handicapped visually, and we always thought that he probably couldn't shoot a pretty good stick of pool, but maybe one of the best pool shooters in town would come in and say, "Hayes, I'll play you a game for a dollar," and Hayes would shoot with him and shoot with him, and we'd see Hayes win a dollar and win another dollar and win another dollar. And we realized this guy was pretty good...that was this guy's game. And if the guy that wanted to play with Hayes got tired of losing, he'd say, "Well, that's enough," and Hayes would say, "Well, I'll tell you what.

Let's shoot one more and I'll shoot one handed. I won't even hold the front of the stick with my other hand. I'll just shoot one handed." And the guy would say, "OK, let's play this one for \$5.00." And they'd play for \$5.00, and most times again Hayes would win playing one handed with one eye and the other guy using two hands and two eyes. It was amazing how Hayes could shoot pool. But those were the things I remembered as a kid how people that had obvious handicaps could still be successful at what they did.

My mother -was a very tolerant woman, and she would permit me, particularly in the summer time on summer vacation when school was out, to roam pretty far from home. I didn't think about it much as a boy. I just thought it was a natural freedom, a right that I was entitled to, but as I grew up I began to realize that she had a great deal of trust in me, that she knew my father had grown up in that town, that she knew that people were not going to hurt me, it was a small town, I couldn't go too far, I might get in a little bit of trouble, but it was a lot better that I learned to move around the community with a certain amount of freedom and make some judgments. Not all the judgments I made were correct. Sometimes I went too far in certain things. Sometimes I didn't go too far. I don't think I ever purposely embarrassed my mother or my family, but I do think some things that I did were the kinds of things I wouldn't want her to know about.

For example, outside of Saxton, up in the mountains, maybe a mile and a half from the center of town, was a big set of rocks in the mountain called Sunday Rocks. For years it was a place where people would hike up the side of the mountain using a trail, and they would go up Sunday after church and sit up on the rocks and view the community down below—Saxton—and it became somewhat of a tradition. People who wanted to take a hike on Sunday would walk up to Sunday Rock. And Sunday Rocks are still up there outside of Saxton for all to see. They were very visible, and they still are.

Well, after awhile, 11, 12, 13 years old, it became pretty easy for a couple of us energetic guys just to put a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in one pocket and an apple in the other and a bottle of soft drink because they didn't have cans then, and just take a walk up to Sunday Rock. It would take us about an hour to get up there, and we'd be huffing and puffing and sweating and stuff, but we'd get up there on a rock and sit up there and look over the town. We'd sit up on the

highest rock of Sunday Rock and kid around about jumping off or throwing rocks out into the trees and holler like people were going to hear us down in the town, of course they couldn't. We'd eat our lunch and then we'd build a little fire, cook a hot dog if someone brought some wieners, and then we'd put out the fire and clean up the mess and then run down the mountain.

The interesting thing was we found that even though it took us maybe an hour to climb up there because it was all up hill and it was hard and it was difficult, when we were really full of energy we would take off running from Sunday Rock and we could run clear down to the center of Saxton to the only red light in town, and we could be down there in 13, 14, 15 minutes. It was amazing! It would take an hour to go somewhere, and maybe no more than 14 minutes to get back! But it was one of those phenomenons. It was all downhill, of course, coming back. We were rested. We were full of energy. And we could really speed running down those mountain trails. Daytime or nighttime we could do it because on a good bright moonlit night we could still follow those trails, and so we did this.

One time one of my friends who was older—it always seemed to be I had older friends who were mischievous—one of my friends got into a railroad caboose parked along the railroad track. In it he got some flares. Now at the time I didn't know what a flare was. But he showed these to us kids. He said that he had stolen them from the caboose at the railroad station. And these flares looked like big, long sticks of dynamite. They were probably 15 inches long, they were round, they were red, and they had a pointy stick or a nail sticking out one end. I said, "What do you do with these things?" And he said, well, if a train breaks down or has trouble, what the caboose guy or the engineer does, he takes one of these flares and he peels the cap off, scratches the top or strikes, and then inside this flare was a chemical which would burn violently for about 20 minutes. And it would put off this bright red glow which would serve as a warning to any oncoming railroad trains so that one train wouldn't crash into another at nighttime if the other had a breakdown. So they always carried these big twenty minute flares with them.

Well, that was interesting to know, and we knew where some of these stolen flares were hidden. Well, it was like one of those things that you gotta do something about something because it's bothering you, and we decided that one of the things that we could do sometime, we'd really

have some fun, was a couple of us would take some flares, go up to Sunday Rock in the evening, and at dark we would put them out on the rocks where they were safe, where they wouldn't burn any wood or any leaves, just out on the rocks, stick them in out there, and then strike them, set 'em ablaze, and then run down the mountain to the town and see what they look like up there.

Well, we did it. One day, it must have been in the fall because evening was coming pretty early in the day, and we went up after supper, left the house, a couple of us gathered together. We went down to the shed where these things were hidden, got these flares, and we walked over through Kelly Row, the brick yard, got on the road up to Sunday Rock, and he hiked our way up. We got up there and it was still a little bit light, so we waited. We set them all up out on the edge of the rocks, and by the time it got good and dark we agreed that each one of us would take one flare, strike it, drop the cap, and we were gonna run for town.

Well we did, and it worked. We struck the flares and we ran just as fast as we could, down through the brick yard, through Kelly Row, up the street and up to the main street of town, and we got up to the red light in town. And nobody had noticed and we stood there and we were looking up at the mountain at this beautiful red glow against Sunday Rock. And people asked what's up there, and we said we don't know. Pretty soon more people stopped and they looked up there, and for the next 7-8 minutes there was this most beautiful red glow up in the mountain and people tried to guess what it was. Was it a forest fire? Was the mountain on fire? Is it a sign? Is it something magic? What's going on?

Of course, we boys knew what it was, but the adults standing around were trying to figure out what is this, what's going on. And then, just as quickly as they noticed it, at the end of the 20 minute cycle, they all went out and the mountain was dark. Of course, we turned and left and went up to another part of town where we gathered and sat on a curb under a street light, and we laughed and hollered and we just thought we had the greatest fun, fooled everybody, found out how the flares really lit up the night, and fortunately didn't start a forest fire. After awhile I think some of the guys talked because people in town would say to me when I'd go in a store, "Got any flares, Eichelberger? Been to Sunday Rock lately? etc." And I always figured that somebody must have talked about it because I think people knew that we had done it after awhile.

