

Brother Chip

By

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## **Brother Chip**

### Prologue

Notes on Brother Chip Obviously they developed into some order in spite of my cluttered mind. May you find some enjoyment from them. Most were written in Bill Jr.'s car as he drove me to Saxton for Chip's funeral, March 27.

April 20, '08

### **Family Values**

We learned very early in our lives from Dad, that all of the Eichelbergers were our family. He'd rent a house at Ocean City, NJ and Aunts, Uncles, and "cousins by the dozens" would be there.

Dad also arranged a Brothers' weekend during football season at Franklin Field for Bob, Eli, and Dick to attend. We lived in suburban Philadelphia at that time and all four of the Eich Brothers were University of Penn grads. Bob and Dick continued Bill's example and were Wharton Grads. Eli could "only" go to the Medical College. Dad, Bob, and Dick liked to keep the conversation on business and deliberately leave Eli out. Rest assured they were greatly pleased to have a brother become a splendid Doctor, Director of Health in the city of York, PA. Later he was so popular and civic minded he was elected as Mayor of the city. In the next generation Chip too followed Dad and was a Univ. of Penn grad from the Wharton School.

Our best Christmases were at Grandmother Eichelberger's home in Saxton, as well as Easter and always in the summer. That wonderful home sheltered at least five generations of us.

The fun of having a five porch home was always novel to us. The sleeping porch was a favorite. Who could resist entering by climbing through a window. Sure there was a door from the back bedroom, but that was for adults. On one of our last visits prior to selling the house, Polly Graham showed Simon how to do that as well as slide down a curving banister. What fun that was to witness.

This house also had a front and back stairway, and a laundry chute. All of this added to the adventure of a vacation home to play hide and seek. Did you ever count how many doors led outside from the first floor? I can count 8, can you? Now that is not a fair question as my two brothers, Chip and Allie and I learned about them as we lived there permanently for many years.

In March ,1942 our Dad died and dear Grandmother opened her heart, arms and home as she invited Hortense, our Mother, to bring the three children and live in this wonderful home. Aunt Bettie would graduate from Wellesley College that Spring and so the house was rather empty.

Believe me, this made our move from Merion, suburban Philadelphia, to Saxton far less painful as we were without our father, but still in a house that resounded with memories of Dad and total family, love, security and care.

Chip was about 14, I was 11, and Allie 7. Where else in our world could you go to the movies for 11 cents if you were under 12 years of age and go unsupervised or ride in the bed of the E. Eichelberger and Sons red store truck delivering groceries? There was a cannon in the park to climb on. The best of climbs were to Sunday Rock. Was this the top of our world? We could look down and see the entire town. Mother knew about how long it took for the climb and be out front of the house to wave a tea towel to us.

The town parades went right by the house and there is a wall we would sit on to view it all. No vacation spot could equal our town of Saxton.

### **Brothers**

How blessed I was to be sandwiched in between two. Actually I often thought of myself as a boy as they seemed to be allowed to do more, so had much more fun than girls. When we lived in Merion and Chevy Chase we had good sized yards and so Chip's friends gathered in our yard and played football. If I was lucky and there was an uneven number they'd let me play. When football got from Touch to Tackle Dad would call me in from the games and he finally said, no more, and tried to explain it was not a girl's game. Chip's boy friends were kind to me and Chip did not seem to appreciate this. It wasn't long before I guessed being a girl would be O.K., in fact a lot of fun.

The rule in our home was to take two years of piano and then we were given the choice of continuing piano or selecting another instrument.

Chip and I had the same piano teacher. Of course he was also at least two years ahead of me in lessons and obviously had made his decision to continue piano. Our teacher, Mrs. Recknagle, thought it would be nice if we played a duet and that was not a plan we could carry out. At first it sounded great, but when we practiced together Chip continued to be at least two measures ahead of me. No amount of self practice to get my speed up could do to slow him down and our wise parents said it did not have to be a plan. The piece was the Blue Danube. and to this day I do have to laugh at that attempted plan of a hopeful music teacher. Chip had gotten all the music genes of which we had plenty coming from both sides of the family.

Chip was an excellent student so when Dad was no longer alive to remind me to get to my homework I tried emulating Chip. Yes, he spent far too much time studying, but I tried none the less. His report cards were impossible to catch up to. I enjoyed school, majoring in recess and gym.

It took college before I found out the true value of and how to study.

## **Work Ethic**

Chip was a saver of his allowance, where as I could hardly wait to spend mine. Here again Dad had directed us to place our offerings for Sunday School in the envelopes provided for church school. We did that on Saturday when we received our allowance so we needed to do some financial planning and prioritizing early in life.[ Thanks Dad!]

I was an adventure seeker and was not necessarily “running away from” ,but “running to “ in Narberth, again suburban Philadelphia where the mainline of the PRR ran behind our home. This was prior to WW2 and there was much unemployment. Hoboes and Bums rode the rails and often came to the back door offering to do odd jobs in the yard for a meal. There also were Gypsies who camped behind our home and I was most interested in both. I was in Kindergarten and first grade while living here. One time I decided to “runaway” and who but Chip offered to give, not lend, me a quarter, which was my

weekly allowance at the time. He even helped me pack and suggested I not take party dresses as he was sure I'd not have a need for them.

Our next move was to Chevy Chase, MD. Chip was a worker. One of his first jobs was delivering magazines, both the Saturday Evening Post and the Ladies Home Journal. Incidentally Uncle Bob was the Advertising Salesman for Curtis Publishing Co. who published these two top selling magazines. They did not come by mail but were purchased by subscription and hand delivered to your door or purchased at newsstands.

Chip had a large route so made a lot of money. He earned it! The Saturday Evening Post was a weekly job, where as the Journal was monthly. He carried these in canvas bags with a strap over his shoulder. I thought he was so lucky to get to do this. He could walk all over the neighborhood. At this point in time I'm seeing this from a 2nd or 3rd graders point of view. He really did not want me following him around, but once a month his load almost doubled with the Journals and they were the heavier magazine of the two. He would then allow me to help deliver. I do believe I got a reasonable salary for this. One winter snow was extra cold and deep so I was allowed to help and I carried most of the Journals. They got heavier every block so it seemed, when they should have been less weight as I got them to the proper homes. We got separated and some gentleman saw me and asked how many I had left. He was taking pity on this little girl as in H.C.Anderson. When I told him he said he'd buy them all and then I could go home. It was such a good idea I thought as I was mighty cold. Never did it occur to me that these magazines were already bought and paid for by subscription. I proudly went home with an empty bag and plenty of money. Chip was not anxious to have me help again.

He could always find a job and was excellent at saving his earnings. Years later in Saxton he worked in strip mines as a summer job when in high school years. No job was too hard or dirty for him. He liked being independent and did not like asking Mother for money. Later as a student at Penn he did general housekeeping tasks, such as dishwashing and vacuum cleaning for his board at the Psi U House. Before Penn he had his Freshman year at Penn State where he had declared Chemistry as his major. It was hardly a wasted year as he got a job at West Vaco with those credentials. But the most rewarding job was working at Bell Telephone where he met his wife and sweetheart for life, Gladys Marie Monskee. His best life time benefit!

## Appreciation of Nature

Chip's love of the out-of-doors lead to both fishing and hunting. Fishing seemed to take first place and it was fortunate for him that a man, Harry Long, who lived on Lower Railroad Avenue and was an avid fisherman who welcomed a young boy to accompany him to the river often. Harry patiently taught Chip skills needed to be a successful fisherman. Chip was able to use this knowledge all through his life enjoying the surroundings of nature as he fished. We lived on Upper Railroad Avenue, now called Main Street.

At Chip's Memorial Service I spoke about him in a few stories, using sketchy and nearly illegible notes written in the car that morning en route to Saxton. Afterwards I was asked by cousins as well as Rebbie and Bill Eichelberger, to put in writing my words spoken that day. So now I needed to organize my notes into a readable fashion. Thoughts have floated in and out. Waiting for a connection I saw a sign. No, not my spirit self but driving out our country roads was the sign I needed, NIGHT-CRAWLERS for SALE. Chip's love of fishing got me hooked back into writing.

Chip liked night crawlers for bait best of all. Well the price was right but they were not always readily available. The most opportune time was in a drizzling rain at night fall. He'd search by flashlight for them in the back yard in Saxton which was full of them. Now is where I come in. I was allowed to carry the flashlight to find the worms and he'd pick them up. Don't think I didn't think I was special. At last I had worth! An assistant to my older brother!

I was also responsible to find where in town someone raised bantam chickens. I traveled by bicycle all the way to East Saxton for them. Their small eggs were desirable for George's diet, as were white mice, which Chip raised .for George.

George? Who was George? Anyone ever hear of him? He was to be a King snake from Ross Allen's Snake Farm in Florida. Chip had saved for the cost and I wish I could recall how much, but it was pricey, and ordered it sent to Saxton.

Well one fine day down the back alley came Steve McCahan, the Postmaster, and several of the "sit and spit" club that hung out near the Post Office. They were carrying the huge

box to deliver to Chip as they were curious to see what was in it. Chip had been well prepared for George's arrival as he'd built a cage out of Aunt Bettie's large wooden packing box that had brought home her College "stuff". She had just graduated in 1942. So it was unpack George and into the cage, an even larger container he went. I'd say the audience was relieved George was not going to run loose in town. Rest assured the news spread like wildfire.

I've mentioned George's diet, but for exercise Chip removed him from the cage and he introduced George to the wash line which we left up for his lifetime for George's daily recess.

As for his name, Chip had ordered a King snake and at the present time the only King we had heard of was King George of England. In fact Chip had personally seen the King up close, but that is another story. Since he was named prior to arrival Chip kept the name. A letter from the Farm said they were out of Kings, apparently popular at that time, and were sending an Indigo Black snake instead along with a refund for the difference in cost. Needless to say Grandmother's lady friends were scarce the years George lived at our house. Bless her and Mother for allowing a huge harmless snake to be housed here. Allie had already brought home a stray dog, the infamous Nipper. Oh well ,what might Tense bring home? Hmmm.

Before I forget and get side tracked again, while living in Chevy Chase, D.C. my 2nd,3rd and 4th grade years thus Chip's probably 5th,6th&7th grades it was 1937-9 so prior to WW2. Dad was on loan from Consolidation Coal Co. to the Dept. of Interior, as advisor re location of coal mines relative to industry and most expedient way to transport it. Preparations for a possible War?? Who knows.

Anyhow the King and Queen of England arrived at Union Station and such a parade route in an open car as the Roosevelts, Eleanor and Franklin went from the White House to meet King George and Queen Elizabeth. My parents were not planning to go join the throngs, but boy did my gypsy spirit ever want to go. A neighbor and their kids included me. Chip?" No, thanks, I am going fishing." Yes, I saw the huge parade, royalty and all and was one of many that passed out momentarily, [ah drama] in the broiling sun. I still was thrilled to have been there and told all about it at dinner that evening at home.

As was usual The News with Lowell Thomas came on radio and of course as always we were silent so Dad and Mother could hear the News. The story of the Welcome Parade and all its elegance ,and heat prostration of onlookers. came first. Then the report continued that for shade and a cooler ride the motorcade went into Rock Creek Park, which had been made “secured’ due to the President and Guests. There were a couple of little boys fishing and they were allowed to continue.

The President had his car stop so he could call to the boys as to how the fish were biting. You got it. It was Chip and friend !! Makes one-upmanship a Royal word. Guess who was pleased to overflowing and yet remained calm. Not I! He now had the spot light for all to question.

As for hunting, I have only scant recollection of eating squirrel or rabbit potpie thanks to Chip’s sharpshooting. The only hunting outing I recall is because I was invited to go. Phil Barnett and sister Natalie were along too. First we had very early breakfast at our house [Grandmother’s].

The four of us searched the woods until Chip found just the right spot for me to sit and watch for squirrels and left me there. Phil was doing the same with Nan. Yes, we all had guns, mine a 4/10,which Chip had me practice with several times prior to this hunt. People who know me are snickering right now, for to sit and wait is not my cup of tea. Sure I saw squirrels and I watched them but had no desire to shoot. Besides a rifle kicks you back and pain is not for me either. The walk in the woods was the best part and I liked Phil so it was enjoyable. Oh yes, and Nan too. Phil and Chip had us girls scare out rabbits in a field which they got for our dinners. As I rethink this early morning , did the boys invite us so we could make their breakfast or to root out rabbits? The end of the story was a bit different as one of the boys with a watch said ,oops we’d better get moving or we’d be late for school. We were and this was a first for anyone of us. The four of us in the Principal’s office must have been a sight to behold to the Secretary and Principal, as they kept a straight face at why we were late and where we had been. Since it was our first “offense” we got of scot free. But you can bet the Saxton-Liberty High faculty was treated to the story at lunch time. Chip was a senior, as was Phil and Nan a junior and I a sophomore.



When Chip's love of birds came I cannot tell you. No doubt Mother or Dad pointed them out early on. He was an avid Bird-watcher and could identify more than I knew existed. Not only on sight but he and Tuddy could hear their calls and say what birds were soon to be seen. Chip and Tuddy lived on a Flyway and counted for the Audubon Society at specific times of the year.

I have the Peterson Field Guide to Birds that Chip gave Mother in the 1970's. at Donahue Nursing Home in Bedford. She listed sightings and Bill and I have added many of ours, dates included. Today an Indigo Bunting and mate was added. Yes, this too spurred me to get on with "Chip Notes".

As kids in Chevy Chase we often visited the National Zoo. It was always a fun Family day. Chip was allowed to move faster and we'd meet up with him at the Bird House. Here he had made friends with a Keeper who saved dropped feathers when cleaning cages and Chip was the happy recipient of them. The birds had two and three story outdoor cages so large tropical ones were on exhibit. You can imagine the rare and beautifully colored feathers he had.

This was not his only collection. He also had a great rock collection in his bedroom, which I was maybe allowed to dust for him. How lucky could I be. But when in a geology class in the '60's at Marycrest College in Davenport I'd wished I'd paid better attention to the rock collection and found I did enjoy collecting my own.

Chip and I often called or emailed re our sightings, especially in the Spring and he stated the Robin is not the first bird in the Spring. Rather it is the Red-winged Blackbird that is the Harbinger of Spring. I had to bow to his bird information, and did so gladly.

## **Teen Years**

Chip was a most sensitive person and for him to receive the triple whammies he did, it had to effect his whole life.

The first and no doubt worst was the death of our Father, at age 41, in March of 1942. He became ill at work one January day and brought home with help. That was scary to me. His hospital stay was not more than two weeks. Then home in bed or sitting up in a chair in Mother and Dad's bedroom. Fortunately it was a very large room, the length of

the house and allowed for a card table to be up all the time so we could take turns having meals with him. Or for me doing homework I needed help with. It was light with windows on three sides.

I believe we each felt Dad was not just a father, but a trusted friend. Chip being eldest of the three felt what I hear most first children say, responsible. Being a male when Dad was no longer on earth, he must have felt even more responsible for the family. He was called Chip as he was said to be a “chip off the old block”, thus William Sweet Eichelberger, Junior.

The WW2 had begun Dec. 1941 for our country and the Draft of men 18-45 [I believe this was the age range] was in acted. That meant Dad needed to sign up and if you could not come to sign up they came to you. Well when the man came to get Dad's information he was most uncomfortable seeing an ill man who was propped up in a chair with pillows for his hurting body, Lung Cancer, which no one said out loud. Only did I hear it whispered. We kids were standing beside him as if we were afraid he'd be taken from us on the spot. Before the man left, Dad realizing the fellow's discomfort and making light of his own physical self, suggested that there might be some way to help in the war. He said if we were to surrender he could ride out on a horse with the white flag. It may have fell flat but I know the man left quickly.

Soon after Dad died we heard that nurses were to be drafted. Well we were half an orphan and if we lost Mother that could mean an Orphanage. What would we do? I had recently learned to make grilled cheese sandwiches and open Campbell Tomato soup so we could live just fine. That problem was solved and Mother was not drafted. She did fill in greatly in Saxton in many ways medically. Saxton's Dr. McClain was drafted and for a while the dear town of less than a thousand had no Doctor. Then a retired Army one, Dr. Yoho came to town and many people continued calling or coming to Mother for help. She taught Red Cross Home Nursing classes as well as gave shots to people in our kitchen. Often her pay was a home canned vegetable unless it was summer, then fresh produce.

The second whammy came April, 1945, Chip's senior year in High School, on yellow telegram paper. Uncle Dick had an office across the street at Eichelberger's General Store. So to see him come in was a daily event but never with a telegram in his hand. He

said we all had to come in the living room and sit down as he had something very important to tell us all. Since we three kids came home for lunch we were all there. Uncle Dick read the message and it was “ with regrets to inform us that William Heckerman was killed in action in Europe.” He was with the Army and very young, 19 years old. Bill H. was the cousin Chip was closest to as they both were near enough of an age and shared interests, especially fishing together.

The third severe hurt was POLIO. He was working at Boy Scout camp as a Counselor in the summer of 1948 when he became ill and brought home. Mother called Dr. Isenberg who diagnosed him and sent him to the nearest Hospital, Altoona. He received the best of care, the Sister Kenny Treatment of hot wet towel treatments to the muscles involved. His nurse was a Bradley, relative of a Saxton family and was most attentive with Chip as she helped him learn all muscles and how to retrain them. Only Chip’s grit and determination and all of our prayers got him through this illness.

Perhaps one of his most fun responsibilities was yet to come the very next summer. It was to give me away when Bill and I were married. I wish I knew what he would have to say about that.