



*THE DARKER SIDE OF THE
ALLEY
by
ELI EICHELBERGER, JR.*

"DARKER SIDE OF THE ALLEY"

Foreword For Mature Audience Only

To understand and appreciate this series of short stories, keep in mind that Allie & I were one year apart in age, and we were truly more like brothers than cousins. We would generally get into mischief, play irreverent nasty pranks, kid each other unmercifully, and become immersed in totally outrageous antics during our pre-teen 8, teen-age years. I feel his spirit is sitting beside me right now as this is being composed. There is a mischievous smirk on his devilish face. He correctly suspects that what I write may be somewhat distorted, perhaps occasionally unflattering, and might show him at times under circumstances less than favorable. However, the really "Bad" stuff is minimum zed to protect the minds of young "innocents" who might unwittingly be reading a copy of this "Novelette". The stories will present him in the best possible light.

So, read on if you dare. Do so at your own risk, and with tongue firmly planted in cheek. And those of you old enough to remember Allie as the little devil he really was, judge for yourself if this doesn't present the "true" nature of my whiney, delinquent, manipulative, hell-raising cousin.

First..a commercial

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MY COUSIN

Allie had a masterful way with words, and would convolute them to suit his best interests. When we were pre-teens, he used to call me "Lil Eli", since my father was known as "Big Eli". Saxton was big on "nicknames" for everyone. I didn't particularly like that "Lil Eli" reference. Especially since I was always physically bigger and stronger than him, could always take him down in a wrestling match, and generally beat him up at will. But he'd often introduce me to his few friends & unwashed casual acquaintances as "Lil Eli". I got my own brand of revenge by referring to him as Hal, Owl, Owlie, Hallie, Lackey and anything but his own "nickname" Allie. After many wrestling matches and thorough beatings, he would remember to call me "Eli" or "Cousin Eli from York" for a short time.

Unfortunately, few Saxtonites knew I was deliberately mispronouncing his name. They just thought that was sophisticated big city pronunciation.

Owl knew how to twist & manipulate words with his innate brand of humor and sarcasm. He could really make his listeners laugh. "This is my cousin "Lil Eli" from York, Pa. You know ...Yooorrrkkk!!!" With a big ugly face twisted up like he was going to throw up. Or another introduction...."This is my cousin "Lil Eli". He isn't as dumb as my big sister says he is, but he's a lot dumber than my brother."

What do you say to an introduction like that? Punch him in the nose! Kick him in the shin! Throw him to the ground again? Darn you Owl, you're not being nice to your cousin from York! I'll have to beat you up again!!

ON NASAL WHINE

Frustration on young Allie's part often *led* to an increased vocal pitch, accompanied by a nasal whine. Hereafter abbreviated to "NW". This would often occur when things weren't going Allie's way.

I asked Chippie about this. He informed me it was characteristic of a self centered, undisciplined, young brat.

I accepted that as a very likely explanation, and later it was verified by cousin Tensie.

She said it was a Benton trait passed on to male offspring....was quite pronounced in Allie, and that Chippie had it too.

ON GOLDEN POND

Grandmother Eichelberger had a small rock & concrete goldfish pond off the kitchen porch in Saxton. We'd play in the side yard, and occasionally do something interesting to disturb the fish. Like throw rocks at them. Or try to net them, or catch them with our bare hands.

NOW YOU bad boys stop that immediately! Yes Mother. .. Hal would say contritely.

One day, while trying to think of some type trouble to get into, we happen to be by the fishpond eating a bunch of red grapes with seeds. We started throwing these red juicy grapes at each other..staining our shirts, faces and shorts.

I threw one that stuck in his ear, and we both started laughing uproariously like little kids always do. Well, then Allie started flipping grape seeds into the goldfish pond. Wanted to see if the fish would eat seeds. Young kids are always experimenting.

Aunt Hortense came out to see what the laughter and general ruckus was all about. She looked us over, stains and all, but didn't know what Allie was doing to the goldfish. "You bad boys come in and get cleaned up right now!"

Owl decided it was time once again to shift blame and accuse me for something. "Mother", he whined in his nasal pre-teen voice, Lil Eli is feeding grape seeds to the fish. I told him to stop it! But he won't. They'll get stuck in the fish's tummy and give them appendicitis. Then all Grandmother's fishes will die and float up to the top upside down. And it's all Eli's fault. I told him not to do that, but he won't listen to me Momma!! Wait till Grandmother hears what Lil Eli did to her fishes.

Aunt Hortense wisely didn't believe him for one minute. Told him to come in and wash up, and that he was going to get his mouth washed out with soap. I was initially puzzled by my Aunt washing his mouth out with soap, but came to accept that it was a regular ritual with Owlie. I guess he didn't brush his teeth regularly.

These lessons will allow the gentle reader to better understand how Allie would manipulate, cajole, ridicule,

shift blame, fabricate, whine, ..appeal for sympathy, turn his trouble into "someone else's fault". He knew how to tell outstanding fibs, con people and act angelically innocent. "WHO? Me? I was just watching. Lil Eli did it!"

I secretly began to admire him as a master of this childish practice. And he'd practice on me too when I visited Saxton from the big city of York. Do something wrong, blame the other guy.

He did this with all his "fair weather" friends. So I wasn't being picked on alone. It was one of his phases in the process of growing up. Luckily, not too much of this rubbed off on Jack & me.

A STABILIZING INFLUENCE

Aunt Hortense knew Allie was a little dickens. She welcomed my presence as a "stabilizing influence." She'd invite me up to Saxton during the summers, to help Owlie grow up and learn good things from his Big City cousin. My Mom & Dad would usually say OK, because they knew if I didn't go, Allie would throw a (NW) temper tantrum to come to York. If left alone in Saxton, he was likely to wind up in serious delinquent trouble for some gross but childlike infraction against the kindly citizens of Saxton.

Some of the stories I remember should show how I was subtly being corrupted by association with my mischievous and devilish cousin Owlie.

That's the way it was in the late 30's, 40's and 50's.

RARE VISITS TO YORK, PA.

During summer school vacations, Al pleaded (NW) with his mother for permission to come down and visit me in York. In fact, he really wanted to get away from street fights with the Brickhouse gang in Saxton. Allie was allowed to visit on several occasions. Usually after a week or so, my Mother S, Father would say "Oh goodness", York is too big a city for that country lad. He's just enthusiastic trouble looking for a place to happen, and he's giving the York Eichelbergers a bad name. Let him stay in Saxton, or attend a Christian Summer Youth Camp. Maybe something enlightening would rub off on him. No more visits to York!! We'll let Eli go up to Saxton.

And thus it came to pass that I spent many remarkable summers with my cousin Allie in Saxton...and Everett and Bedford and running hard to keep out of all the mischief he created .

HELPING THE EICHELBERGER STORE TURN A PROFIT

It was a dark and stormy night. Allie & I were about 6 & 7 years old, supposedly sleeping on the upstairs back porch bedroom, watching the lightning, and listening to thunder roll. Rain, cloudbursts, A summer thunderstorm at night. What are a couple overactive youngsters to do on a hot rainy night like this? Lets beat up Tom Hickes. Grandmother had along 5 foot pillow...called a Bolster. We kids used it as a punching bag. It was fun beating the stuffing out of Tom. He operated the Aldine movie theater in Saxton. Meanest man in town. Never would let little kids in for free. And always threw us out if we were even slightly noisy. What a grouch!!! I think we saw more half movies than anyone in Saxton. We'd have to pay and go back the next night to see the other half.

Well, the adults were downstairs listening to the "Wireless". News about the war...that's World War II. Cousin Tensie, my favorite gal, was sent upstairs to tell us to shut the heck up. Now you can imagine a cute pubescent teenager, fighting off the pimples, telling two healthy little kids to knock it off.

Read us a story, Allie would coax. We'd knock it off. But not Winnie the Pooh again. That's getting old. Tell us about "Alfred the Aunt Eater," Allie pleaded. And so, Tensie would make up some outrageous non sensual story about a man who was imprisoned for cannibalism. Those were the real scary stories we liked best. Allie believed all of them, too. He believed almost anything he heard. I later learned the proper word for this condition was called "gullible".

And later on Tensie would tuck us in for the 17th time and tell us if we were good, we could help at Eichelberger's store tomorrow.. With the delivery truck!!! Wow!! And Allie was in heaven!!

An old 1937 dodge pick-up. Yeah man! Making the delivery rounds was the ultimate fun trip for little kids. Now remember...you two ride up in the cab with homer Carbaugh, the driver, not in the back with the will. Goods. Yes mamma, yes Aunt Hortense.

We

And we'll be a big help. Think they'll let us have some crackers from the cracker barrel?

Next morning, sunny and bright. A good day to help homer.. Run over to Eichelberger's store. What do we have to load?

See those 30 bags of flour on the pallet over there..start with them.

Then get the potato sacks, those buckets of tar, and that stuff there.

This was neat! We were really helping. But, oohh, those 25 pound bags were pretty heavy for little kids. Give me a hand

owl!!

Allie would sneak off to carry the lighter goods to the truck and leave me with the flour & potatoes. That's the price of admission, Lil Eli. You have to work harder because you're bigger and stronger, and anyway I've done this lots of time before. You don't get the chance to help with deliveries all the time like I do!

I knew he was being less than honest. Owl was hardly ever willing to do heavy work or even allowed to help on the delivery truck. He broke too many things.

I wasn't being fooled by my loving cousin. But what the heck! This was a real trip helping with the Eichelberger Store Delivery Truck! Allie had me convinced that this was the ultimate far out neatest and most fun thing to do in Saxton. Not everybody could work on the truck. Just kin. For free. That's how he sold me on it!

You never saw little kids do this kind of work in York. There were laws against child abuse. After awhile, the truck was loaded for its daily delivery run. We started off.

As soon as the truck was out of Saxton, Homer stopped and let us hopped in the open back. What a blast! Fresh air! Riding in the country making deliveries on a sunny summer day.

I sorely remember that many deliveries required numerous round trips of long walking distances up to farms, homes. Man, it was tiring. Homer just sat in the cab enjoying his free help, while Allie sat picking his nose.

By mid-day, we had carried more than a ton of goods. The delivery run was wearing a little thin, and we two were getting more than weary. What a workout for a ride in the back of a truck. But we stuck it out, and returned to Saxton around 4 PM. Homer stopped again and made us hopped in the front with him before we got to the store.

After that one long hard day of deliveries, we were two very tired little kids. Nobody had to tell us a bedtime scary story that night. We were asleep at the dinner table. Helping with the Delivery truck was not on our list of fun things to do for the next day, or all summer.

"Alfred the Aunt Eater" indeed!! I never believed one word of that phony baloney tale. Now Tensie, will you tell all of us "the rest of the story?"

THE FARMERS FRIENDS

One lazy hazy summer day during the 40's, three of us were looking for something legal to do. Well, mostly legal. Just a little excitement. Lets go fishing! We could go down to the river, and borrowing someone's boat if they weren't using it. My elder brother Jack was also visiting Saxton... He was the third party...all excited with the anticipated fun being in Saxton with his cousin Allie.

So the three of us started our fishing expedition by marching resolutely in the direction of the river. Along the way, Allie noticed a pile of big cardboard carpet tubes outside a shop. These were about 12" diameter and 8-10'long. Naturally, something this big would have to have a good use on our fishing adventure. There just had to be some good use we could find for them. So, we each took one, and staggered down the hill behind the church towards the river with our respective big cardboard loads.

The carpet tubes were really awkward to carry, but we continued onward towards the river.

Allie had some hooks, a tangle of jumbled up fishing line, and a knife. We would make fishing rods from sticks, and find worms along the bank. That was the plan.

But what about these big awkward cardboard tubes? What in the world would we do with them? **Who knows? They'll come in handy for something. Onward we trudged like good little heathen soldiers.**

Lo...harken and behold —beyond..what is that? Why it looks like a farmers wheat field. And the wheat is fully grown. This is something that needs harvesting!! And we have to cross the field to get down to the river. So let's help the farmer, and mow some of his wheat! Well, the three of us spread out, holding the big tubes at knee level. Marched three abreast. We mowed a path wide enough for a 3 lane highway right across the farmer's wheat field. Won't he be happy to have such helpful kids assisting him with his farm chores?

After doing our good deed for the morning, we ditched the tubes along the river bank and went scouting for a boat to "borrow" Just borrow it for a couple hours and catch lots of fish. They'll really be proud of us back on Main Street tonight when we bring home a string of fish for dinner.

I recall Jack found the first rotted hulk of a long abandoned wooden rowboat down the river bank. Look it this, he hollered!! We all scrambled to the boat. What a sorry looking thing!. No oars. Half submerged. But it did belong to someone, because it was tied to a tree with a ratty old rope. Now what are we going to do with this thing?

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO..YOU THREE ARE GOING TO JAIL FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY FIELD. This unexpected and close at hand loud voice startled us!!. It came from an apparently upset man running towards us. Maybe something he ate for breakfast didn't agree with him.

Owlie said..quick, into the river, swim to the other side. Jack 8. I ran like crazy away from the ferocious farmer. He looked like someone with a mean streak at least 30' wide in him. But for some unknown reason, Allie didn't jump in the river 8. swim for it, or even run for it. He just stood by the dilapidated boat as if in shock. The gruff farmer grabbed him and started shaking the sauce out of him. We could hear him crying from up the river. Jack & I circled back and tried to get the farmer to chase us, so Allie could make a fresh get away.

Let him alone, let our cousin alone!! He's just a baby, and didn't do you any harm. Let him alone, we shouted!!

GROWLLL..I'LL GET YOU TWO AND ALL 3 OF YOU WILL MARCH RIGHT BACK TO SAXTON WITM ME. YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THIS!!! Well, Jack & I could see this man was not socially inclined nor friendly. It was turning a bit ugly. He had a very poor vocabulary, too! Lots of his language was unprintable. With our shouting and added distraction, Allie yanked his arm free, and started running up river. We ran too. Ran, and ran, and ran! After what seemed like miles of running, Mr. Friendly Farmer stopped chasing us, so when we were far enough up the river, we sat down along the bank, panting, exhausted. What a way to start the day. We hadn't even started fishing yet. After a well deserved break, we got up and started searching for another boat. Nothing was going to stop our fishing trip.

After walking another half mile or so, we spotted one further up the river. It was along the bank, abandoned. Just like the first one. Close inspection led us to believe this was perfect. Just the one we needed for our fishing expedition. It didn't have any holes in it, and was tied to a big stump with a rope. Easy enough to untie.

We decided to flip it on its side and dump out the rainwater. All together now...rock-lift, rock-lift. When it was half way up ..OH MY GOSH!!! LOOK OUT, a nest of copperhead snakes. Right under the boat! OOH...LOOK!!!! a big snake and a whole nest of little snakes, all coiled around. It was apparent the big snake was the Mother. She didn't like our unwarranted intrusion. Slithered toward us. We got sticks and started swatting it. Snake didn't like us at all.

Out of nowhere came the same Farmer! He had been following us, and just about grabbed us a second time.

We ran and ran again. Allie led us on a very long roundabout way back to Saxton. We didn't want to meet the Farmer again on our trip home.

We dragged our exhausted bodies back a trek of many miles to Grandmother's house, wondering what was for dinner. It wasn't fish.

The next day-, Jack & I were unexpectedly sent home to York. Aunt Hortense & Grandmother Eichelberger had received a distressing report during the evening from Saxton's Policeman, Nick Villa. He told them of the damage Allie had done to the farmer's field. Grandmother didn't want her two darling Grandchildren from York to become further corrupted by cousin Allie.

So as his punishment, we were separated for the rest of the summer.

CAMP TOKOWANDA

One summer, my Father developed a brilliant defensive strategy. He packed us both off to a brand new Boy Scout Camp. (Thank Tensie for reminding me). Camps in those days cost about \$15 per week and were generally thought of as being great fun. Swimming, fishing, hiking, sailing, good food, etc.

This camp was newly opened, "undeveloped" and located somewhere in the mountains of central Pennsylvania. I don't remember the exact location. Had my Father known more about this new camp, he would not have sent us. It was Camp Disaster! Best remembered as being virtually UNDEVELOPED and not much fun at all. We slept in crude log cabin shelters. The first summer at Camp Tokowanda was dedicated to child slave labor for its construction. And we first year campers were the paying construction crew. Most people would think of a Scout Camp as a place where you would earn Merit Badges and learn neat camping things.

The child labor force had to cut down trees where the mess hall would eventually be built, clear brush for future roads & trails, build boat docks on dry ground, haul tree stumps out of the area where the manmade lake would eventually form, dig drainage ditches for runoff water, and construct latrines. The camp counselors favorite phrase was always.. "It'll be finished next summer, so come back".

We never did.

Part II. Another side of the story....

There was one kid named Cleo Adams at camp. Cleo's father was an elder in a Church somewhere, and an Assistant Scoutmaster at this camp. It seemed Cleo's main preoccupation that summer was to instruct some of the younger Scouts in certain rudiments which accompany sexual awakening. Fully mature young Cleo came from a righteous, church going, guilt filled, God fearing family. So we thought. He also had an attractive & promiscuous teenage sister named Dawn. She was totally boy crazy and used to hang around camp during the day. If her father had permitted, she would have stayed 24 hrs/day. And that would have been fine with most of us. But her father made her go home at night.

Cleo tried to teach Allie the function of autoeroticism. But Allie had utmost difficulty, and couldn't seem to master the technique at that time.

Later on, I think he got the hang of it.

About Christmas there was a newspaper article regarding Mr. Adams. It made an inside page of a local paper. He had been arrested and incarcerated. The charge was incest.... with his daughter Dawn. A nice upstanding religious unit, that Adams family. I think Mrs. Adams later changed her name and moved to Broad Top.

SAXTON'S SWAP SHOP

Getting the two of us together was like giving two kids matches and gasoline, and being told to go outside and play. Which leads me to another catastrophic affair instigated by the Owl. Once again I was dispatched to Saxton to "influence" him and help him grow up into a fine young man. (Which he eventually did, I must add in recognition of a major achievement).

One sunny summer morning we were dreaming of something to do, some way to earn some money. Since I was a partner in a very successful Swap Shop with Artie Gladfelter down in York, Allie & I hit on the outstanding idea that Saxton could use one too.

----- A Little Background -----

"Ike & Art's Swap Shop" in York was located in the big vacant End floor over my Father's garage barn at 308 S. George St. Art & I started a comic book exchange, since we had plenty, and had read them all millions of times. What a bonanza grew from this small idea!! Fill a comic book need, and people will flock to your book exchange.

We'd sell comics for a nickel or 3 for a dime, or a penny apiece. Prices depended whether they had covers on them, and how torn up they were when someone traded their old ones for other "better" old ones. Brand new comic books were 10 cents in those days. Sometimes, kids would bring in other items to trade for comic books VALUABLE things from their homes. That's how the Comic Book Exchange grew to a real thriving "Swap Shop". We started getting small household items, and Art or I would "guess" at some ridiculous trade-in value to swap for our old comics. A good working order 8 MM home movie projector got some young lad 25 comics on a trade in. Boy, did he take a beating.

I suspect he also got a beating at home! This kid's father came in several days later and bought it back from us for \$5. Five BUCKS! That was real big money in those days. Movies in were only a nickel for kids at that time.

There was good money in comics.... I'd tell Owlie. Kids love them, would trade for others, and you could be Comic Book King of Saxton. He really liked THAT idea!!!

One day a kid came in to Ike & Arts and traded a silver & gold plated Parker Fountain pen for 10 comics.

Since there wasn't any money in the cigar box we used as a cash register, and I wanted the pen, Art took something else from our trade in profits equally worth 10 comics. That's how we'd divide up non comic book material goods that came in which we wanted. Anyhow, I showed the pen to my Dad.

Well, it didn't work...the ink bladder leaked, but he told me a new one like that would cost about \$25. So I took it to Georges' Stationery Store at 301 S. George St. and had it fixed for about \$1.50. Used that good old Parker Pen all the way thru college.

We really got some good useful merchandise in that old Swap Shop.

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Art and I were well known businessmen in Junior High School. Ike & Art's Swap Shop opened every afternoon right after school. If business was slow, we'd do our homework in the Swap Shop.

Then read Classic comics.

As the business grew, we needed many more tables to hold our ever growing accumulation of books and household items. We wound up with IS tables having perhaps 500 sq ft of table space. Most were made of doors on saw horses, old lumber, whatever would work for table counter space. There were probably up to 20,000 comics in our shop at times. We really had a corner on the comic book market in York.

Allie loved to visit York and help us in the Swap Shop. He would sweep the floor, and do odd jobs for the chance to read 50 or more comics a day. I think, in retrospect, reading too many Archie, Superman, Capt Marvel & Dick Tracy comics may have been a cause for some of his adolescent brain damage.

Despite this handicap, he & I thought it would be really neat to start another swap shop. I liked the name "Ike & Owl's Swap Shop" (Saxton Branch). He pouted, NW, and sulked over the shop name & spelling. Insisted that his name be first...since he'd run the Saxton branch. So we eventually worked out a negotiated compromise and decided to call it Allie & Ike's Swap Shop.

Now...where to open up shop? Well, there was an old 10' x 30' chicken coop attached to the barn (garage) up in Grandmother's back garden. All it needed was a thorough cleaning out, some tables, a sign, and some merchandise. I brought up several cartons of our oldest, rattiest, no cover comics which nobody in York would buy. (even for the bargain price of 2 for a penny). That would have to do for a start. We'd improve our offerings by "Trading Up" for better comic books with covers as business thrived.

The Chicken Coop clean up project was a dismal 8. dirty job. Dusty, chicken dung, old cardboard, junk, boxes. There were decades of stuff in there. I thought it would never look like a real Swap Shop. But we persevered & finally got it looking reasonably good. For some dumb and obscure reason, Owl decided to cover the floor with cardboard. He figured it would make the place much more respectable and add an extra touch of class. So we cut up big old cardboard boxes and tacked them down over the wooden floor slats.

Even with this added pizzaz, the place still looked like a chicken coop to me. It was nowhere nearly ready to open as a true "Swap Shop". There were several more days work to do. I thought it needed painting too, but Allie poo-pooed the idea. He was impatient and wanted to launch the business tomorrow.

At dinner that night, he grandly announced his new enterprise, and proudly told how he had cleaned up the chicken coop for the Swap Shop. Everybody smirked, nodded wisely, and thought .."what a good idea to keep those E hellians occupied."

After dinner, we returned to the setting up job. Allie's attention span wandered, and he became absolutely preoccupied with reading some of the merchandise...just so someone wouldn't buy a comic he hadn't read a couple of times. Since he had become no help, and I was still miffed that he took total credit for this swap shop, I quit working alone and started reading comics too.

About dusk that evening, sitting on the cardboard floors reading old coverless comic books, my cousin decided we needed some more light.

I don't know where he went, but he came back in about 10 minutes with a dusty ole kerosene lantern and an open topped can full of kerosene.

Did you ever read about the big Saxton Chicken Coop fire?

Owl made a funnel out of cardboard and tried to pour kerosene out of the can into the small lamp filler opening. Naturally, a lot spilled on our nice cardboard floor. I became quite alarmed, and told him to stop spilling the kerosene !!!!

I don't think this story needs the ending. You can use your imagination.

Well, on second thought, I will add one more paragraph.

I remember a mental picture during the conflagration: Owlie panicked, and ran out of the flaming Chicken Coop shouting Fire! Fire! He left me inside trapped in a corner. I was somewhat alarmed myself. **You might be too, being left alone, in a strange chicken coop which was on fire.**

About the only thing I could do under the circumstances was try to stamp out the kerosene fed flaming cardboard. Coaly and with complete disregard for personal safety, and the priceless merchandise, I first tried stamping the fire out, but that didn't seem to work very well. Then started throwing comics and more comics and more comics on the fire to smother it.

And eventually this technique smothered the fire, with loss of hundreds of no-covers in the process. Allie sheepishly returned in a few minutes, after the fire was out. He was carrying a bucket of water he had scooped out of the fish pond.

Needless to say, Al & Ike's Swap Shop (Saxton Branch) flamed out that evening. How could we dream of selling partially burned "no cover" comics in a charred out Chicken Coop? And I couldn't take them back to the main branch in York. They wouldn't even bring 10 for a penny. And my partner Artie was not happy to hear about the loss, either. About all we could do was use this experience as tax write off for the York Shop.

We never told anybody about this fire. Allie was afraid he'd be punished, and I thought I might get sent back to York forever.

SAILING DISCS..... SAXTON'S FIRST FRISBIES.

Long before Frisbees were invented,, you know..those round things you sail in the wind, Allie & I invented our own. One summer Saxton day, the two of us were looking for something constructive to do. The night before, Grandmother Eichelberger played some music on her priceless wind up Regina music box. It was the type which preceded Edison's cylindrical phonograph, before RCA Victrolas, and years before Compact Discs and their forerunners, the 78 RPM, <+5 RPM, 33 RPM record players were developed. The music box used huge 15" metal discs with lots of perforated holes in them. The holes were the music triggers, and made each disc an original self contained Long Play record. At one time, Grandmother had hundreds of these long play metal discs.

To keep this in proper historical perspective, Jill now has this irreplaceable antique, along with a scant few of the priceless music discs. To the best of my knowledge, Regina switched to manufacturing vacuum cleaners. I know they don't make the discs any more. The market is too limited.

But Allie & I have a long and well kept secret. We know where Jill can get lots of these music discs. Dozens, scores, scads, hundreds. Right close to Saxton. For free! Where? Why, they're down by the river side. In the river. On the bottom of the river. Somewhere. Covered with mud & silt. Otherwise undamaged except for very minor dings & dents which possibly might have inadvertently occurred where during earlier successful flights they whammed against trees or boulders, before being sent on their last unsuccessful flight attempting to sail across the river.

Jill Dear, I am positive you can find them even today with a metal detector and a row boat.

To continue, we two decided the day's most constructive activity would be to

invent disc sailing. But what could we use? Qwlie thought the funny round things by Grandmother's music box might sail pretty well. Let's try one out in the back garden. Swish...Oooohhhh... look at it soar. Man is that neat!!!! Bet it "Lil Eli," and sail it back my way. OK!!! Here it comes!

Flinggg...Soarrrr...sai l l l l l....what a neat thing!! And to think all along these metal discs were just lying there on a shelf under the music box. Nobody but us would have ever thought they were good for anything but dumb marching music playing on the Regina music box. Well, we sure invented *a* neat new item. We called them "Sailing Discs," and Sail was what they did so well.

So, off to the river we went with an armload of Sailing Discs. Let's see who can sail one all the way across. Wheeeee....lookit go. Splash. Not quite. Try another one. Swish..... splash. AnotherWhooooooo up it goes...a long sailer. Almost made it across.

Thru the hot summer afternoon we sailed all of the newly invented Sailing Discs. Some actually made it across.

Allie and I never told anyone what happened to most of Grandmother's music discs. He strongly suspected something awful might befall him if the truth were known and Aunt Hortense or Grandmother ever found out. Anyway, we were the original inventors of "Sailing Discs" long before Frisbees were ever thought of. Too bad we didn't patent the idea. We also forgot to copyright the name. Years later someone brought out a similar plastic toy and called them Frisbees. What a dumb name! We could have made a fortune.

This sordid true story has never before been revealed. We're sorry Grandmother. And Jill. We were just a couple of little kids having fun!!!

