

Back When Dreams Landing Had a Football Team

(Taken from a note by Dan Butterfield in the June, 1998 USNA *SHIPMATE*, Class of 55 column)

When my two brothers, sister, and I moved to Annapolis in 1940 for our Dad's second tour of duty as an Engineering instructor at the Academy we were immediately befriended by Eddie Turner, a smiling, outgoing, adventurous, and mischievous Tom Sawyer of a kid. He was a year older than I.

As the natural neighborhood leader Eddie took it upon himself to squeeze out of each and every day the most fun you could possibly imagine for all of us kids ranging in ages of 5 to 9 years. He would somehow manage to include everyone in the major events such as sandlot football, baseball, or commando warfare against other neighborhood "gangs". However, for the day-to-day adventures we had a closed membership that met in The Clubhouse, a small tool shed on the waterfront at his home looking out on the Severn River. That is where we really grew up and became wise to the ways of the world around us. Hours upon hours throughout the year, hot or cold, rainy or sunny we would discuss, read, argue, play games, learn about girls, grownups, good and bad people in the neighborhood, and plan our next adventure, project, or talk about how each of us was going to the USNA.

Often during warmer days we would spend many hours on his screened-in front porch playing Chinese Checkers and Ma Jong. Sometimes, even the girls from nearby, the Armbrusters sisters and Morris girls, would be invited. I think that Carol, the cute little red-haired girl of the Levis family, who lived across the street, might have come over a few times, but I'm not sure. But girls never entered the clubhouse on the waterfront! According to Eddie's number one rule it was absolutely out of bounds to girls!

From as far back as I can remember Eddie would always make sure that each of us played sports and never were afraid to try just about everything one. We were always pulled into baseball, tag football, ping pong, badminton, and later lacrosse. The most memorable football game that I recall was against a gang of boys from **Dreams Landing Navy Housing** led by a young fireball named Henry Mustin. They lived up to their reputation of being tough, but I think we beat them due to all-out practicing Eddie demanded of us. It was one of his shining moments of young leadership. I'll never forget it. (I wonder if our classmate, Hank Mustin, also remembers that game).

There was soft-shell and hard-shell crabbing, swimming, sledding, ice skating and piece-of-coal puck ice hockey out on Weems and Spa Creeks. Every week we also walked the rails of the B&O train tracks into Annapolis to see the Saturday matinee movie for all of 11 cents. Afterwards Eddie led the way to the toy store to pick up the latest matchbox model tanks, jeeps, half tracks, and planes to play "Soldier" in front of his home near the Clubhouse.

The scariest adventure of all was the game of "train chicken". While standing on the rails on the railroad bridge, which crossed the Severn at Wardour, we were required, as the train approached, to wait until the very last moment to leap into the water, about 30 feet down. The last one to leap wins! Another version called for us to stick our heads up between the railroad ties and make faces at the engineer of the approaching train, ducking down at the very last second. In later years I often wondered how many of these train engineers suffered near-heart attacks because of us crazy little Wardour Boys. I also wondered if our mothers ever knew about this game. Eddie talked us into not being afraid to take risks.

Then there were the all out neighborhood games of Cops and Robbers, Commandos, and Robin Hood. I remember that the Mustin Gang was rumored to be coming in from Dreams Landing to

engage our Wardour Gang in commando warfare. I can't remember if it ever materialized, after a great deal of tactical training and strategic planning led by our young leader, Eddie.

One day he gathered us together in the clubhouse to discuss plans to build a submarine. At the nearby Navy dump we found an industrial water tank and hauled it home to the Turner waterfront. Eddie convinced a friend of his Dad to cut a hatch in our soon-to- be submarine. He also fashioned a hatch cover that we could hold shut after submerging. Our master plan seems to have left out such things as breathing, a periscope fixture, propulsion, and escape. Fortunately, Eddie's Mom ended our early submarine careers just in time. As an epilogue to this story, Eddie, my brother Dave, and I all became submariners in the real thing a few years later.

I am convinced that many qualities of my own character that helped me in later years, such as strong leadership, unselfishness, working hard, fairness, honesty, business sense, and risk-taking came from Eddie's leadership, friendship, and role model. He had passed to me his Wardour-West Annapolis paper routes by the time I turned 10 years old. He handed over all the lawn-mowing jobs he had held throughout the neighborhood for years. I can't remember why he was so good at convincing me that I needed all of these jobs, but I ended up with them all.