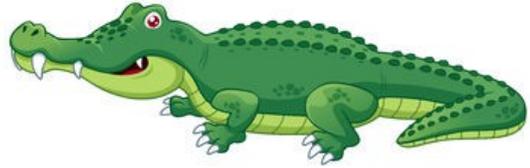


BEDTIME STORIES

(as related by Alan Harrap)

I started the twins on bedtime stories before they were two years old. To start with I read stories and fairy tales - gradually introducing my own quirky additions. Of course there were popular heroes like Peter Rabbit. I discovered that Beatrix Potter had in fact considered writing about a crocodile called Amelia, but never did (True!). So after telling them about Captain Hook and the alarm clock, I told them about alligator wrestling. Well, was that a real hit! From then on they were always asking for an alligator story complete with angry alligator noises. Of course they weren't frightened at all, since Jill told them it was all nonsense, and that Daddy was an old softie, who liked to tell silly stories.



They started at school. Jill used to collect them and chat to other mums. One day she was talking to Gary's mum, Melissa. Melissa had heard about my stories, had picked up on the Florida connection and wondered how often we'd been there. Jill told her that the Florida and alligator stories were just the product of my over-vivid imagination. "Oh you really must visit Florida", said Melissa. "We go every year. Gary loves it and your twins would too! We've put all our best photos in a Magic Memories' book. I'll lend it to you - just promise to look after it!" A few days later Jill came home with the twins, bringing 'Mike and Melissa's Magic Memories'.

I was in the garden, and a little while later I was alarmed to hear Jill cry out "Oh My God!" "Alan, come here" "Alan, you toad, Alan!, Alan! " I found Jill pointing in amazement at the open page in 'Mike and Melissa's Magic Memories'.

I saw a crowded arena, with a stage. And on it was a clearly recognisable figure grappling with an alligator. In front was a poster saying

'See Cecil Lilywhite Conquer Again !!'

Yes, I really had been an Alligator Wrestler ! That was a holiday job in Florida. It started when I met this guy in a bar and he said 'Why don't you do some alligator wrestling - I can get you into that'. I thought that was utterly ridiculous, since I am puny. But he continued 'We'd do a poster of this weedy little Limey called Cecil Lilywhite (that would be you). The audiences would love it. We would give you training, you'd make lots of money and it wouldn't be all that risky. Why don't you give it a go'. So I did.

I looked up from "Mike and Mellissa's Magic Memories" with the revealing picture.. Jill was smiling. "What a secretive man you have been!" "Secretive?" I said. "But I'd told you - and the twins - all about it over and over again. I wouldn't lie to you!"

DAVID CAWSEY