

The Aleksis Story

(Aarre Aleksis Lahti)

On May 4th 1941, a baby was born.
No ordinary baby boy,
No he grew to own the field
And all items within
As no one would ever be able to:
He could recreate those elusive visual items!
On July 14th, 2018, the recreations ended.

Story by his brother, Ahdé Lahti, 5.25.2019

“Diddle diddle dumpling my son John went to bed with his stockings on”. What a beginning to the real world. So there was Diddy and his side kick two years later, Dinky little thing. I was named before I was born. So there was Diddy, May 4th, 1941 and Dinky, June 21st, 1943.

The interesting part about looking back at the history of the 1961 entering into Art School, is how to approach it. Aleksis was already there, I was only following the leader. Early on, his friends were mine, I didn't have many.

Dressed alike, fostered dependence, lack of individuality. However, if the birth order had been reversed, he probably would have still led the way — in everything. He just had more assertiveness and confidence.

He made a choice, to refuse a cigarette when offered, so



I too never smoked.
Why is that important?
Where will it take this story?
I don't know.

This is not about me, it is about Aleksis from a younger brother's memories. If I wanted to know what happened, I just asked Aleksis. He would have remembered it all. Now, I'm starting to fill in some blanks.

He had to wear a Dunce Cap in Coconut Grove Elementary School.

Either because he couldn't read well enough, or perhaps he brought one of Carl's (grandpa) cigars to class!

I would have had to wear the same had I been in grade school. I do remember not being able to read as a kid, but I got through because Mom worked with me every day so I memorized the entire chapter.

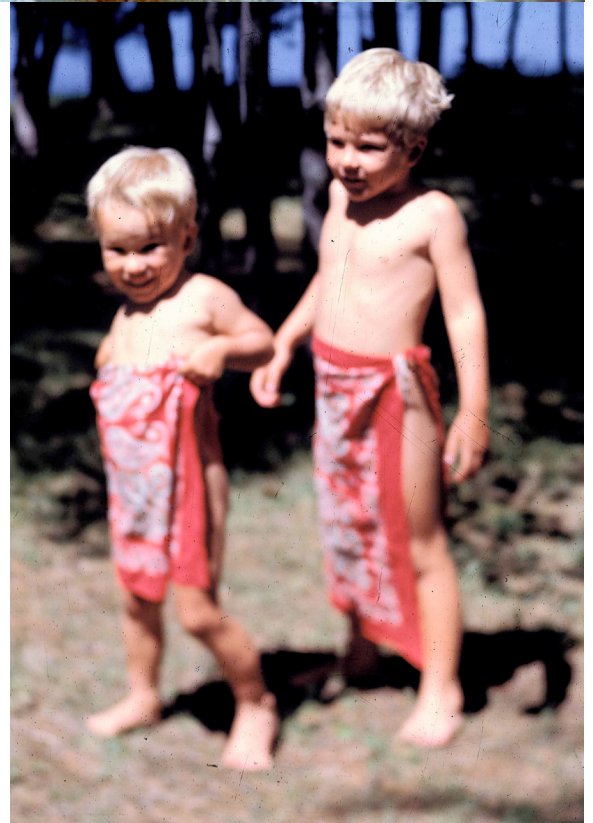
Our summers were spent at



the Rest Lake cottage (Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin. An all log cabin designed by pop and built by grandpa), Alexis one year started a birch log carving for a bow-sprite for our boat. The chainsaw could only be used to rough it out, then the Finnish Axe (purchased in Finland in 1959), and finally finished with a series of gouges or curved wood chisels.

The final finish on the piece ended with fine chisel marks left in. It was painted white with gold leaf bottom of the mermaid. It was and continues to be magnificent! The carving has outlasted the Cruiser Pop built. The smaller in the log cabin wall on Marquette Island and the larger in the house he designed and built with Bonni in Dexter, Michigan.

We had written an article for Car Babies, a blog celebrating hand made cars. The reason I mention this is that there are many more sto-



ries that need to be written. I will include URL for the article shortly. http://www.lahtidesign.com/Site_09/Lahti_Crosley_1958.pdf

In 1958 we approached Pop with a typical teenager's request: "Can we have a car?" Our hearts were set on a Chevrolet.

"You have a car here," he replied. "You just need a body."

Pop and uncle Uolevi had recently abandoned their dream of building a spider (sports car).

On a narrow strip of grass between the driveway rested the remnants of a Crosley Hotshot, bare frame and engine equipped with dual carburetors, Braje manifolds and finned valve cover. We were eager to tackle the project but lacked mechanical experience. Aleksis was a freshman at the University of Michigan studying art, and I was still in high school. "We didn't



know anything about cars," I picked up what I thought was the generator and was told it was a starter. Artistic talent and ingenuity would have to compensate for their mechanical shortcomings.

I don't remember when this Portrait of Bonni and Aleksis (by Stuart Klein page 9) first appeared, but I thought I would put it in the story.

In 1963 Bonni and Aleksis left for Europe on the BMW R67 600 cc motorcycle (page 9).

Aleksis was a better artist than I. He did have a flair with the pencil, it just flowed in one line, while I had to scratch away to find the form, and still do.

I was only 2 years younger , but that difference was huge. It brought a big difference in technical skills (computer).



Aleksis used a pen and "white out" on tracing paper, a master at it.

As a designer, Aleksis would build a complete working prototype in order to bid it out correctly.

If I now try to establish how he (we) worked, it was always to build a "test bench" working model, then refine it for production.

By that I mean, the work, up to the design, will create a story which can be reread, to solve problems in the future.

One year while Bonni was driving to Detroit, where Aleksis had to deliver some very large oil painting canvasses, for Meating Place in Gross Point, Bruce Cameron. They were very loosely painted in Aleksis' quick style. Bruce accused Aleksis of painting them while Bonni was a driving. I can't remember which restaurant it was, either the Double Ea-



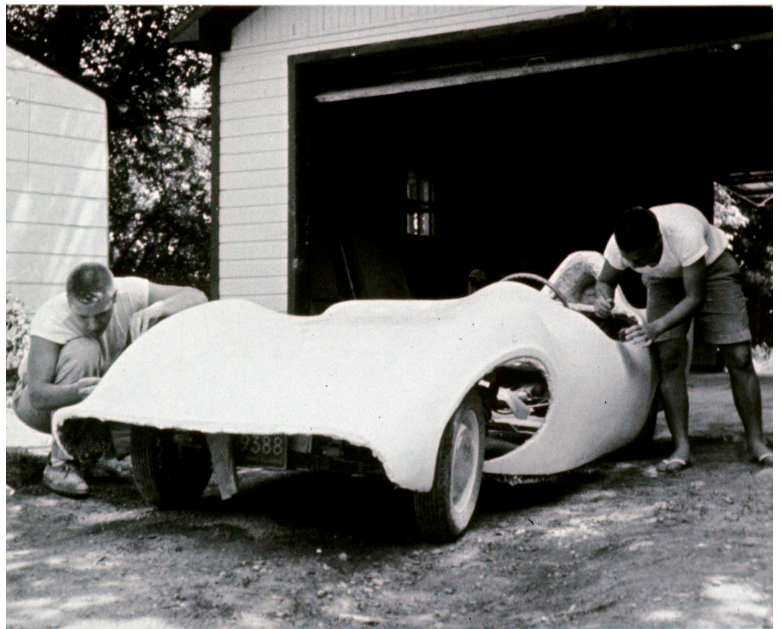
gle or Meeting Place, Aleksis even designed the food menu, small appetizers, created with Bonni's home made (Irma recipe) black bread.

His "style" was fluid, to say the least.

When Aleksis went to the Academy de bel Arts in Florence there was a cute exchange between he and another student: Aleksis was asked which pencil he was using. That was a favorite laugh, how useless to think the tool would make the drawing.

Question: Bonni, what was the experience in Europe like?

Maybe there are stories about the (forced "over eating") dinner at the Marchillini's house. Aperitivo, antipasto, primo, secondo e contorno, insalata, formaggi e frutta and dolce were unknown courses back in the states.



On many occasions we did share the same wave length.

One day at the island we tried to understand if the horizon was a curve or straight line. Of course it took a lot of drawings and explanations to finally determine that it is a curve. The language was sketching.

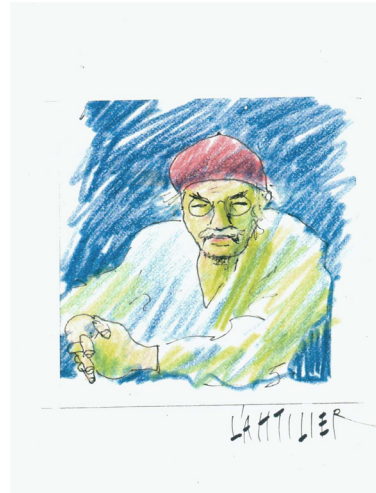
Another time at the island (MI) we with friend Luis, were dropping an engine block as a mooring for the Ensign Sailboat (page 6). As we were circling, I threw the motor over, and to this day Luis doesn't know how we communicated that it was the right spot, neither do I.



For every occasion, Aleksis made cards. Beautifully drawn or painted and sent by

real mail. And unbelievable accomplishment in this day of instant communication.

Above are two wax resist Easter Eggs (page 9) Aleksis dipped in dye for Bonni.



Taru has been keeping the tradition of making cards for Bonni.

Below (page 11) is the stainless steel Stove in Dexter Aleksis designed and made. He had the corners bent, then welded. It is the auxiliary heat for the Dexter Edifice.



Aku, Aleksis, Aikia and Sascha in Hessel Harbor (Michigan) boat show (1982). Rowing the little skiff (Pop built to row and sail, while traveling the states, page 11). It had a mast, sail, rudder and lee boards. It too has passed away.



Taru: "Hey Ahde sorry for the delayed response to your

praise for my sketches. I loved your sketch rendition of my side view sketch. In regards to the thoughts of Aleksis and his stories, that may take some time.

There are a lot of stories, but which one's to tell and in what context may take some time. I wish I would have taken video of him telling his favorite jokes over and over again. Since he told the same jokes over and over again, we would often start laughing within the first few words of the joke.

It didn't hurt that he had a contagious laugh, and he often began telling a joke in total hysterics. It actually got to the point where we'd asked him to just tell us the punchlines, we already new the joke.

With that being said, we all have are confusing and regrettable moments in life. Ahde, I understand the frustration and love for a sib-



ling, obviously mother nature has a sense of humor and likes to fuck with all of us on occasion.”

There is an entire life zone that I only experienced, but write about it from all the stories (our family visited and loved it too). That is the Cooks Island life. As we grew up, Pop and Mom always took the winter off to visit the grandparents in Coconut Grove, Florida (Car packed).

There was a draw which became stronger in Diddy than for me. He and Bonni bought a piece of property on Cooks Island, no utilities, no roads, no telephone and a bow-ered dock on the neighboring property.

Eventually they built a kitchen, bathroom, all on stilts. The concept was to have an eco friendly warm water retreat. They went down with the entire family twice a year, where fishing, snorkeling, scuba, crabbing and Island life was normal. They



partied, eat and entertained the guests on their piece of coral and sand. Eventually they and each of his children built their own cabins.

The original structure (page 13) was built with their partner in crime, Dick Buckheim, who eventually moved and owned another island very close. I think the kids, Bonni and Aleksis had a feeling of freedom, which separated them from the everyday world and work. It was all work, building on a small speck of an island, where food, drinks, lumber, and ice came over on their boat only on high tides. "Running the cut" was definitely a macho nerve racking high speed (engine tilted with only half a propeller in the water to skim over the narrows at full throttle) move, especially in the dead of night with no navigation lights or markers (one white stick at the 90 degree turn.

I think the children should



cook's island, florida keys



write chapters more just on the Keys, cantinas and long drives.



I don't know why Cigars, but they are "Aleksis"! Maybe it was the Keys, "Cuba Libra", the Hemmingway influence or just being in the Keys creates the rebel. I remember Buckheim's influence and a few old punch lines; the "all the lobster you can eat!" dinner and the "First Anniversary is Lead!"



















The
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5.4.1941-7.14.2018