

When It Broke, You Visited Doc Williams

by Kern Hagg

(#7 of Series)

No, Doc Williams would not visit your home with a medical bag. He was a fix-it handyman who worked from his junkyard on Hickory about a block north of Kensington and across the street from Heller Lumber. The timeline was the mid-50's. Doc Williams had a property secured by chain-link fencing with a gate usually locked with a chain and a padlock. Doc was more comfortable with a welding torch than with people, and his property was always protected by a German Shepard dog. Doc lived in a trailer on the property, and he had a collection of junk including cars, washing machines, construction salvage, etc. If it was metal, Doc dealt with it. My father would pull up our Pontiac to the front gate, and he would have to holler, "Doc!", and the grizzly old man would slowly emerge from his trailer. The first thing he did was grab his dog and secure him to a chain which had been wrapped around the bumper of a junked car. Then, he would open up the front gates, and it was safe to walk into his domain.

Doc would fix metal parts that were broken like lawn equipment, bicycle parts, metal shelving, etc. My father was a tropical fish enthusiast, so one Saturday morning, he brought Doc Williams a drawing for a 50-gallon aquarium. One week later, we returned to pick up the frame for an aquarium which we would have for decades to come. Doc Williams had welded angle iron into this rectangular shape, and Dad sanded off the rust and painted all of the raw metal with metallic silver Rust-Oleum. Then, he bought the plate glass from Bowen Hardware downtown, and somehow he acquired a can of aquarium cement to complete the project. We filled it with water, and amazingly, it never lost a drop! Can you imagine making an aquarium? I have often wondered why my father wouldn't go to a pet shop and just buy one. I guess it was because of frugality and the fact that he needed another project to pursue, and he was successful. He and Doc Williams made an aquarium that was a beautiful show tank that lasted for many, many years.