

My Childhood Ways to Earn Money
by Liz Gibbons

When I reached about age 12 I began to think of ways to earn some extra money. My brother and I had received allowances occasionally in our growing up years, but it was not a weekly part of our life.

My first baby sitting job was when I was twelve. A neighbor asked me to watch her younger daughter, Dotty, for about two hours. Dotty was five years old, and that was an easy job. I received fifteen cents. A few months later when I turned thirteen I began babysitting regularly in our neighborhood and then for some other families nearby. Initially I earned fifteen cents an hour. One family had two children, a boy and a girl, who were a challenge. They did not like to go to bed, and it was a chore to get them to settle down. Another family had children who were easy to care for, but the parents stayed out until midnight or 1 a.m., and I had a heck of a time staying awake. I continued babysitting all through high school.

My best neighborhood friends, Sis Bauman and Linda Speer, and I created some money making ventures. When we were in junior high we gathered our outgrown toys and books and had a toy sale on Linda's front porch. Looking back when garage sales became popular, I felt we had been a forerunner of that practice. We also formed the Triple SSS Lawn Service. S stood for Sis, for Speer, Linda's last name, and for Snooky, which was my nickname. We charged \$1.05 to mow, rake, and trim neighbors' yards. You may wonder why \$1.05. We could not divide \$1.00 evenly between us, so it had to be \$1.05. One summer the three of us created a circus performance which we held in Linda's back yard. We invited the neighborhood kids. Some mothers even came and brought their young children. We charged probably a nickel or dime and served cups of Kool-Aid. We did tumbling exercises and performed other feats. I had learned how to spin ropes and did that with a short rope, a lasso, which I spun in front of me and then a long rope which I flung over my head and spun it around my body.

Sis and I also detasseled corn for two weeks in July for two years. Purdue had some experimental farms and hybrid corn had to be detasseled for cross fertilization. The first year we did this we walked down the rows of corn, reaching up to pull out the tassel. The next year they had motorized detasseling machines which carried us down the rows holding us about eighteen inches off the ground making it easier to reach the tassels. Each machine held eight detassellers. Working in the hot humid Indiana weather we were worn out by the end of the day. However, in two weeks I could earn a little over \$50 which I used to buy school clothes.