Musical Memories

Romance in Record Time

WHEN I WAS 17, in 1946, I took care of the jewelry and records while working in a 5- and 10-cent store.

One day, I was playing one of my favorite songs, Perry Como's record Prisoner of Love, when a blond-haired, blue-eyed young man came into the store and stopped at my counter. The song was one of his favorites, too, and he asked if he could take me to lunch.

I declined, but when I left the store to go to lunch, the young man was waiting for me and walked along with me. Well, we did have lunch together, and I found out he was just out of the Navy following World War II and had come to town to visit his sister. He never went back to his hometown to live.

We dated about 10 months and were married January 23, 1947. My husband still likes to tell folks he got me out of a 5- and 10-cent store. He said he fell in love at first sight. We still love to listen to Perry Como sing Prisoner of Love.

—Ruby Davlin, Marshall, Texas

A Superb "Platter"

THE SUMMER OF '42 was my initiation to the world of Big Band music. At 14, I was vulnerable to ballads about adolescent angst and aching love.

While making deliveries for a local pharmacy in Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York, I'd walk down leafy streets of brownstone houses. Through open windows, I'd hear garbled voices and a compelling mix of strings, swooning saxophones and muted trumpets from radios or record players, giving a romantic cast to my lamp-lit mood.

When a recording ban went into effect during the war, the music

industry was forced to rerelease old standards and employed a cappella choirs to back up featured crooners. Radio repair shops began to buy and sell used records.

One day, I was flipping through a discount bin of musical chestnuts with labels I'd never heard of before. I found a platter with a scratchy "A" side. To my surprise, the "B" side was in mint condition and featured the old favorite Night and Day recorded by a popular singer with Tommy Dorsey's band. It turned out to be Frank Sinatra's very first recorded solo away from the Dorsey band.

I plunked down two dimes and ran off with my prize.
—Joseph Fioravanti, Oneonta, New York

Records Kept Her Company

I WORE OUT three 78-rpm records on the grade school Victrola playing the song My Wild Irish Rose while I corrected papers, did blackboard work and cleaned the one-room schoolhouse where I worked in North Duxbury, Vermont.

It was in the 1930s, and I walked to and from school, residing in a boardinghouse. It was more pleasant to have the privacy of the school for paperwork and carry less work back to the house. I was also homesick, so records really helped.

I did eventually meet my future husband, Ralph, through the school. He was the school's truant officer. We're celebrating our 62nd anniversary in June. —Helen Davis, Waterbury, Vermont

Victrolas Got Him Started

WHEN I WAS 5 or 6, a great thrill for me was playing the windup Victrola in the parlor of my grandparents' house. And twice a day at school, marches were played on a large RCA record player.

I soon learned to play the Sharpshooters March and Under the Double Eagle on my harmonica, but my favorite song from the

1920s was (Just a) Little Street Where Old Friends Meet.
I sang along with my family in Swedish the best I could until I learned how to speak English in kindergarten.

When I was a teenager, I bought a used accordion and taught myself how to play it. I eventually started a band that lasted for 15 years.

—Raymond Larson, White Cloud, Michigan

Music Accompaniment

IN 1962, I was home on leave from the Air Force, between tours of duty on Crete and Taiwan, and was maximizing my time by dating the young lady who is now my wife.

I would often meet her for lunch at the Trailways bus depot in Roanoke, Virginia, which was directly across from the hardware store where she worked.

I had been building up my courage, and one day, during lunch in the bus station, I proposed. In the background, Acker Bilk's record Stranger on the Shore played on the jukebox.

Few people today may remember the artist or even the song, but they are forever etched in my mind.

—Don Connor, Hendersonville, Tennessee

A Tennessee Lullaby

MY FAVORITE TUNE from earlier years is The Tennessee Waltz, because in the early 1950s, my parents played that record and others in the evening as we young ones fell asleep upstairs. Sometimes, we peeked down to see them slow-dancing across the living room floor.

Now, I hit "replay" on the CD player in my car again and again as I sing along loudly to The Tennessee Waltz.

—Mary Wasche, Eagle River, Alaska