

From Chapter Four, “Leisure Time”

I remember many evenings spent enjoying time with my family at home, especially in the winter months, when it was too cold and dark after supper for us to be able to work outside on the farm or in the garden.

This was before television, and we didn't have a Victrola, but we had a nice cabinet radio, the same one that sits near my front door today. And we listened to whatever the local radio stations happened to play. I remember one show that featured an “all-girl orchestra.” They were called the Longinettes, because they were sponsored by Longines brand wristwatches. Besides the music, we listened to WJR in Detroit or WSPD in Toledo; they aired news and talk shows. Dad especially liked to keep up with the radio news.

Or we listened to the less soapy radio dramas, the ones Dad liked too, such as “Lux Radio Theater” or “Perry Mason.” Mother and I enjoyed listening to romantic radio soap operas like “The Romance of Helen Trent,” but those aired during the day, not at night. I guess they were meant to occupy housewives as they did their housework, while the husbands were out working. I know Dad did hear bits of those shows occasionally when he came in from the fields to have lunch, and he certainly thought they were very silly!

Anyway, we also played music and sang together in the evenings, and those memories are particularly good ones for me. Although my mother could play the piano, she was less interested in making music than my father and Kathy and I were; she enjoyed sewing more. But she liked to listen as she sewed, so she would go into the dining room, where her sewing things were, and she'd work quietly and listen as we played.

All this happened more than sixty years ago, but I remember so clearly those family evenings, how safe and happy they made me feel: the coziness of the warm living room on a dark winter's night, the music from the radio or the piano or Dad's cello or clarinet, and the quiet hum of Mother's treadle sewing machine, reminding us that she was nearby. Those were happy times.