

Vinyl-Scratched Memories (Number: 0787)

The scratches in vinyl, no matter how slight, will distort and alter the music: yet it still plays. Dementia has worn my great-grandmother's precious, priceless memories, but it will never take away her music. Though weary with age, vintage shellac never fails to remember its song.

I find myself situated comfortably on the couch in front of my great-grandmother while my mother and grammy chat in the kitchen. With four generations in one home, I gratefully recognize how fortunate I am and will cherish the fleeting moments we share. My great-grandmother, Nan, gradually begins to flip through her childhood memories like fingers caressing an aged collection of records; a certain familiarity and comfort reside in these abstracted melodies. From the select few moments that she can recall from her youth, music stands out as the most colorful one. I sit with patience and attentiveness as she depicts the cacophony of sounds filling her home as her nine brothers and sisters return from their school day. Instantaneously drawn to their instruments from all corners of the home, they are immersed in their music: her brother making the trumpet scream, another quietly plucking his guitar, her father tuning his upright bass, and herself practicing "chopsticks" on the piano. My Nan's childhood stories are ingrained into the grooves of my family's records; they are the very core of my purpose and passion.

I look back on my experiences with music at a young age with fondness and nostalgia. I have a vivid memory of leaving a sliver of space for my grandfather on the rickety piano bench and watching in wonder as he played with such authentic passion and expertise; physically reacting to the music projected from his soul. I immediately recognized and fell in love with the idea of transcribing one's emotions onto an instrument to turn them into something coherent with pitch, rhythm, and tempo. Upon finishing his piece, my stubby fingers mashed at the aged ivory in enthusiastic self-determination, attempting to replicate his exact song. Performances such as these were always followed with a chuckle and a "bless her heart" by my loving grandmother watching nearby. Even at a young age, and at the unfortunate expense of my family members, I was always pushing to do things by myself. My deeply-rooted desire for independence and infatuation with music has been passed down from generations like folktales, ever-evolving. The transformative power that my family's stories hold cannot be compared to anything as beautiful and moving.

As my Nan struggled to detail the specifics of her past, I couldn't help but feel such a swell of bittersweet emotion. One day, I will be sitting with my own great-granddaughter, teaching her about the wonders of music and how impactful it has been on my life. Old age runs in my family, this being illustrated by my 100-year-old Nan, but so does Dementia. Seeing her attempt the strenuous task of recalling topics that used to be so effortless to speak on put my life into perspective and has made me realize an important lesson: our time on this earth is

exceptionally limited. I will spend it doing the things that I love and will share those moments with the people I hold dear, and there's no better way of connecting with people than through music. Two independent souls can communicate complex emotions through pitch and rhythm in the purest form of expression; nothing brings me more joy and fulfillment than this.

The etchings in my family's records, composed stories that subconsciously arouse the murmurs of melodies and taps of unknowing feet, have molded me into the person I am today. Music has a staggering uniqueness of unearthing memories buried by Dementia and brings life and passion to people of all ages, and I am forever in debt to music for giving my great-grandmother her memories and quality of life in her old age.