



Music and a Place for Me

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I graduated from Catholic high school in June 1969. It was extraordinary. I felt free, like I could now be a different person.

The summer of 1969 was tumultuous. My high school boyfriend dumped me, I worked a lot to pay for college and a friend killed himself. It was not to family or friends that I sought refuge, but to my long-playing vinyl records. Music helped me celebrate and mourn.

During late nights working as a waitress at Luigi's, I would crank up a jukebox stocked with the music of the Beatles, Buffalo Springfield, Jefferson Airplane, and Simon and Garfunkel.

College started for me that fall at The University of Akron. There were a lot of kids from my high school attending with me, but I wanted to meet new people, different people, people with whom I had no history.

A friend of mine told me about the Music Listening Room located on the first floor of the Gardner Student Center. As I walked in for the first time, I heard playing what I knew was Jefferson Airplane, but these were not songs I recognized. "What album is that?" I asked a boy with big, fuzzy hair. "After Bathing at Baxter's," he replied. It was a revelation.

We sat on couches or chairs, but often on the floor. We talked, read, and listened. The love of the music was the bond that drew us together in that room. It was our own private place; we who were just kids trying to find others like themselves. There were boys with ponytails, girls with New York accents, and students with something in common with me. It was magical!

In that room, I first heard the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young record and the first Paul McCartney solo record. I was introduced to The Stooges, Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band, The Band, and got to know better Santana, The Who, the Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin. Abbey Road played regularly in that room. Some of the music I hated but most of it I loved, and I methodically created a nice collection of albums, now scratched and worn and mildly flood damaged, but still loved.

I met my future husband in that room. He was often

there with his ponytail and his curly-haired friend. They were cute and silly and I liked the curly-haired one particularly. He and I would talk about music a lot and decided that we would trade albums. I offered a Creedence Clearwater Revival for his Blind Faith. The exchange was to take place at his apartment. I went to meet him and there, quietly sitting in a chair, was the ponytail boy. He was nice. We hung out and got to know each other, and we married some years later. We're still married.

The kids of the Music Listening Room were interested in more than music. We had discussions about Nixon, the Vietnam War, abortion, and women's rights. We thought we were going to make the world a better place. One day, with no warning, the Music Listening Room was just closed. We were shocked. We tried to find answers, but we never found any.

I couldn't stay in that room forever. I had classes and a campus job. I needed library time and study time, but the Music Listening Room on the first floor of the Gardner Student Center was where I went to feel free.