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# Music Through the Generations

*Thelma Serrie*

It is a foregone conclusion that young people now focus their greatest interest on electronics: iPods, cell phones, cameras, and the biggest and best, HDTV.

How things change! In the late 1800s, after the Civil War, country folk were glad to have a home, a family, and a caring community. Entertainment in Gilboa was generally hometown talent, with the exception of a traveling theater or musical group at a town hall, grange, or church. Most homes afforded a parlor pump organ and a violin, more commonly known as a fiddle (guitars were not prevalent until later when the cowboy fad hit). To play the fiddle was a young man's shining star, his road to popularity, and sometimes a way to earn an extra dollar playing for dances.

My grandfather, Andrew Moore, was one of thirteen children of Chancy and Betsy McHench Moore and lived on the Cross-Cut from Guinea Road to Keyserkill. My son, Bob, found the house foundation, which is almost invisible today. Andrew (or Popie—in our family spelled this way and pronounced Poppie, as we affectionately called him) would ride the horse to Broome Center for the mail. He attended the one room school on the corner of Keyserkill Road and the Cross-Cut. His school lunch pail usually contained one cold pancake, and walking barefoot to school saved his shoes for wear in school and church.

Popie had a fiddle and he wanted to play. His mother vowed that the Devil was in the fiddle, so Popie had to practice in the woodshed. My grandfather grew strong, tall and handsome—and played a great fiddle. He worked as a farm hand for David Mattice in Guinea. After Mr. Mattice died, Popie kept working the farm for the family and eventually married the farmer's daughter, Etta. This was the beginning of the Moore Family Farm, where six generations lived until 1978.

Andrew Moore played his violin in many grange halls, dance halls, and homes. His fiddle playing was completely by ear so he would hear a new tune and practice until he could play it. Andrew played the "Lancer's" and the "Fireman's Dance." The call for the "Fireman's Dance" was: "Fire, fire, water, water, take your partner and pass two couples." This would continue until all couples danced the full length of the hall and back.



My grandfather Andrew Moore playing his fiddle in our old parlor in front of our organ.



My grandfather Andrew Moore relaxing with his fiddle at home.

At hop-picking time, there was a nightly dance at every hop house while the pickers were working. They would pick hops all day and fill those big boxes, receiving only meager wages; and then they would dance all night. My grandmother Etta and Popie would play, and their son, Birdsley (my father), played the organ or piano chords for accompaniment. Dancers paid 10 cents a corner, which were three sets of square dances. The first set was a short plain call, the second a really complicated dance, and the third was a jig.

At most dances, there were both square dances and round dances. The round dances were waltzes and fox trots when couples danced together. There were many fine fiddlers in my grandpa's day: Almerhan Haskins, Richard Mattice, and his son Dick. My father, Birdsley, played both violin and piano. He took lessons from a lady in Blenheim who lived in a small house on the Everett Mattice Farm. Ford Mattice, another Guinea Road native, played cornet and was a member of the Schoharie County Band directed by Harold McCoy.

Dancing continued as a major social event for many years. I remember sitting on a chair at a dance at the Breakabean Grange Hall, dangling my feet and waiting for my dad and mom, Birdsley and Belle Moore, to dance by my chair. Back then, couples danced around the hall in a big circle, like they still do in the south. I thought it was great fun. My older children fondly recall "front porch" dances when all their friends participated in the Moore musical tradition.

Music continued as an integral part of our family, but the sound changed when we were introduced to the broad range of instruments available through the Gilboa Central School. My music teacher, Miss Lorna Oakes, was an excellent violinist and thus we had an orchestra. I played the piano until my parents gave me a clarinet purchased from Montgomery Ward. My daughter, Sara, later played that same clarinet, as did my niece, Kristina. Shirley played the saxophone. Pat was a drummer. Sara's son, Nick, was another expert percussionist. Lin and her daughter, Stephanie, played French horn, but both really enjoyed a good alto part in choir. Tonya enjoyed band, playing flute and piccolo, more than her mother or sister. Today I teach piano to four of my great-grandchildren: Ron Nowaczewski, Victoria Mueller, Katie Murphy, and Sarah Wright. The girls come for a lesson each week and are showing promise. Ron, at 16, plays all music very well (including the classics).

Music has played an important role in the Moore family. Interestingly, research suggests that music helps develop other intellectual skills. My wish is that music will continue to enrich the lives of many young people in school and at home. May you find your music forte and know the satisfaction it brings.

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