

# WDAV

## Memories of Boyhood and Graham Weathers (As Best An 83-Year Old Can Remember)

Listening to music was a big deal growing up. There was many an argument over who was the best singer, Bing Crosby or Perry Como? We kept our radios on and tuned to our favorite station that carried our kind of music. Every Sunday morning at our house, my dad had the radio tuned to Southern country religious music. His real favorite program came from Renfro Valley, Kentucky.

Graham marched to a somewhat different drummer. Instead of Bing and Perry, he was much more interested in the likes of Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin. All the kids called the classical music Graham listened to "long haired music". He had that kind of music all to himself.

At an early age, Graham began taking piano lessons from Blanche McKeown. She was married to a farmer named Howard McKeown who was a retired school teacher. They lived in a two story home situated about where Dr. Keefers's dental office is now. Blanche was known in the neighborhood as "Little Miss McKeown". She was very diminutive in size and was always very well dressed. She walked everywhere she went and always was under an open parasol regardless of the weather. Evidently, she was a very good teacher.

Howard McKeown had two sisters who lived just across the street from my home. Howard had a barn and kept all his farming equipment there. He ate all his meals with his sisters rather than at home. For some reason I don't know, Howard's sisters would not permit Little Miss McKeown to set foot on their property. Late each afternoon during the week, she would walk down to the McKeown sisters home and call to Howard, "Mr. McKeown!", from the side of the house which is now Buckoak Street. Although this happened every day, I never heard him answer her call one time.

Mrs. McKeown began telling my mother about how well Graham was doing with his piano lessons. She began to tell me about Graham and was determined that I was going to learn to play the piano like Graham, although Graham was a real good friend, I had absolutely no desire to learn to play the piano. It wasn't that I did not like music. I simply had no interest in playing the piano. As time went by, the more good things Mother heard about Graham, the harder she pushed me to take lessons. I eventually lost but after one lesson, I was never pushed to go back! Graham went on to become Mrs. McKeown's star pupil.

The world was a much different place when we were growing up. When we became a little older, Graham was given a record player. It became customary for about one Saturday a month that Graham and I would meet at Dellinger's Drug Store (where Handsel's Carpet is now) at 9 o'clock in the morning. We would take the Queen City Trailways bus to Charlotte. The bus stopped at the square in Charlotte. We would go into Ivey's and go up to the music department. Graham would listen to as many classical records as he could each time. Usually he would buy two or three. We would have lunch in the soda shop and catch the 2 pm bus back to Stanley. We did this regularly for a couple of years. It was fun to go and I enjoyed myself even if I had absolutely no understanding of the music Graham was listening to. One Saturday, Graham was looking at some weird device that sounded like a clock ticking but he could change how fast it ticked. He called it a metronome. He bought one and the next time I was at his house, he attempted to show me how it helped him. Can you imagine parents permitting two young kids to do that sort of thing now!

Well, kids grow up. Graham left for Wake Forest and I did not see or talk to him for many years. However I would find out that his music had made a much bigger impression on me that I could have ever imagined as we sat and listened to those old records in Ivey's.

Years passed. Phyllis and I were married and began our family. She was not a fan of "long haired music" so most of what I listened to was good popular music. One day in the newspaper, I read that a radio station in Spartanburg, SC was planning to build an FM station that would broadcast a signal in stereo. They planned to broadcast classical music. There was no station anywhere around that was doing this. I had to have a stereo radio to receive this station. I did find a kit for a radio that would handle multiplex so I built a stereo radio before the station signed on the air. I loved it.

As my responsibilities increased with the company I worked for, I wound up working with plants located from Greensboro, NC to Montgomery, Alabama. As stereo radios were being put into automobiles, I was able to find enough stations to continually listen to the same kind of stereo music as I traveled between Greensboro and Montgomery.

Unfortunately, as the years passed, those stations could not survive with a classical format. Good music is hard to find these days. WDAV operates out of Davidson College and is the only station I know of in this area that still has a classical format. If you were to ride in my automobile or truck today, you would be listening to music from WDAV. I will not tell you that Phyllis has learned to like it yet, but she does tolerate my listening.

Sometime after the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I was talking to Graham after church. I told him, "Graham I bet that I have the only old beat up pickup truck in Stanley that's tuned to WDAV, and its all your fault." He replied as only Graham could ....., "You're wrong, .... there's two!"

Bill Hawley  
August 2015