

# My Father's Music

Contributed by admin  
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You did not need to know my Dad very long at all to know that he loved music. So much so that when we finally bought a karaoke machine, probably some time in the early 80's, tapes of Chet's Original versions of various artists songs were littered all over the house and his Buick LeSabre. You could not get in his car for any length of travel without Dad popping a tape in the cassette player and asking "who do you think the singer is?"...

Most folks were pleasantly surprised to discover it was not the well known balladeer they guessed but was really Chet, Sr. Though, I must admit at least on one occasion when a grandson was asked who they believed the singer was the reply was..."I do not know but he is not very good is he?". This left my dad unperturbed and with another good story to tell.

My father was always singing...he wrote and sang the lyrics to the 1947 Ashley High School graduating class song and sang at weddings alongside the polka/rock wedding band de jour at the request of family members. He tried his hand at MCing mostly I suppose to satisfy his need to get his music out and of course he sang at churches loud enough to drown out Mom and others who were self admitted listeners versus singers.

Mostly my Dad sang at home.....from early in the morning when homemade lyrics sprung from his lips to late in the day when his favorite classics were reproduced to calm his mind from our busy, crowded house and as fatigue settled in from toiling at two - three jobs.

It was at these times without the taped background music of the karaoke or the organ music of the sanctuary that my father's true music came forth. The acapella songs that spontaneously erupted as he prepared a family meal, whether playfully as a ditty or teasing one of his grandchildren about a potential love interest, the music had a unique sound of its own. The tempo of his music provided the beat of the house. No matter what the circumstances or how tenuous they maybe Chet's music overshadowed them and set the household equilibrium in perfect balance.

Now I am unsure if Dad intentionally deflected the anxiety, fear, dread or other feelings that naturally occur in the course of a families existence by his music or whether the music simply sprang from some inner fire that was stoked by his extroverted, creative nature.

Dad's true music extended beyond the harmony and melody of notes and lyrics. The real masterpiece of his music was demonstrated in how he combined a joyful thankful spirit and tremendous courage while exhibiting an ability to love his family unconditionally.

For all of my five decades my father's music provided structure and at times sustained me. My father's music crescendoed throughout my youth and echoed into my adulthood. The fundamental values...such as honesty, industry, courage, resilience, and tolerance were the cadence and beat he instilled to accompany whatever music I was to create.

On August 27, 2005, after a long courageous battle against emphysema my father's music was silenced. As I waited for the hospice staff to perform their postmortem tasks I removed the oxygen mask that had tethered him to the life giving apparatus for more than a half decade. I laid my head on his barrel chest and knew his soul was singing somewhere in a better, celestial choir.

Mortality has a way of casting a veil over even the most optimistic souls and the grieving process provides little room for hope. Even with this my father's music was never so alive or forceful as it was at his funeral. Person after person approached our family with stanza after stanza, tune after tune of their own versions of my father's music.

There was the federal judge who in tears explained that my father's intervention had provided second chances to scores of teenagers who became successful adults. The young man that told of my father's kindness and courage as he chaperoned a young family in and out of the projects so they could safely reach their church or purchase groceries. And there was the doctor whose son had become a productive adult because my dad intervned at a critical juncture in his life to help him regain his footing. Countless others shared memories that sounded in perfect accord with the notes imprinted on my life.

I am unsure what quality and quantity of my music I will leave for my loved ones. I am painfully aware of my shortcomings but the other day one of my children said something that fanned the flames of hope when she said her Uncle, my youngest brother was a lot like me because he sang all the time.... especially in the morning.