

MUSICAL MEMORIES

There are those times when lyrics, a melody, a spoken word, a thought, or a mental Kodak moment takes me on a "Sentimental Journey." My earliest recollection of enjoying music was during WW II. My uncle Rocco was called to serve, and although the adult family members were somber hearing this news, they were able to engage in some levity about him going to France and singing contemporary songs.

I don't remember my mother coaching me, but at the age of almost four years old I was entertaining the family troops. Usually I was lifted and placed on a chair, stood erect, saluted and proceeded to sing "This Is The Army Mr. Jones," and "In The Army Now." I remember the day he left, after I sang he gave me a big hug. I was oblivious to the "good bye's" between him and the adult members, appropriate for a four year old.

Every Saturday morning in our L shaped kitchen, Margaret laundered yet another load of clothes on the washboard. Next to the large double sink stood a medium sized ice box with an Emerson radio set on top. Before she addressed the washing chore she turned the radio on at about 9 or 10 a.m. and welcomed Martin Block in his crystal studio with the Make Believe Ballroom Time show. That's where I planted myself for the next couple of hours. We listened and sometimes sang along with the music selected by popular demand.

Although my preference in music was songs with a lively beat, I allowed myself to explore music in general. When I became of age and started to become politically aware, I opened up to folk music. The Kingston Trio, a commercialized folk group expanded my interests to more authentic folk song artists such as Pete Seeger, and Oscar Brand.

When Martin Block broadcasted show music, it was a double treat. Margaret went into the story telling of South Pacific, Oklahoma & Carousel. I hooked on to the catchy tunes of "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out Of My Hair," and "Surrey With The Fringe On Top." I found my own way with "My Fair Lady" and learned that one of my bosses referred to me as Eliza Doolittle. My New York, & East Harlem accent sometimes made me sound like one of the bowery kids with a "dems and dos" accent. I think I eventually thought of Professor Higgins & Eliza Doolittle as my imaginary friends. And even though Rex Harrison was advanced in age for me, I had an imaginary crush.

Recently I read a tidbit about Rita Hayworth femme fatale. Apparently every man in the world was nuts over her. In an interview, she mentioned how disappointed some of them were. "They went to bed with Gilda (a character she portrayed) and woke up with Rita Hayworth." The song for those days was hot! "Put The Blame On Mame." What I remember is that any woman who aspired to be a femme fatale wanted to be Gilda!