

**The Music of My Soul—Growing Up a Wilcox**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

Erin Wilcox

Thesis Advisor  
Dr. Laurie Lindberg

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie Lindberg". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Ball State University  
Muncie, Indiana

December 2003

Graduation Date  
December 21, 2003

## Abstract

After taking Honors 199 as a family writing course, I realized that I have a talent and a strong interest in writing memoirs about my life. I have compiled a cd of very specific songs that will forever remind me of my family as a whole or as individuals. They are our favorite artists, songs only we know, or songs with symbolic lyrics.

I have also included a memoir for each song. They include where I've heard it, what was occurring, who was there, why it's important, etc. These stories capture moments I don't want to forget. My hope is that other people will enjoy reading these memoirs as well because they will not just describe where the importance of the song takes place, but will have a meaningful and touching story to go along with it.

From doing this thesis, I have become more aware of the importance of my family and have done my best to capture it on paper. I have improved my writing skills and hope that I will continue to do so in the future. These stories are meant to be read so perhaps others can easily see themselves in a similar situation and be entertained or even moved.

## Acknowledgements

-I would like to thank Dr. Laurie Lindberg for advising me through this project. She was extremely helpful in correcting my errors and making herself available to my needs.

-I would also like to thank Dr. Joe Trimmer for inspiring my interest in this project when he was my professor for Honors 199. I will add this thesis to a project I started in his class.

-Finally, I would like to thank my family for giving me the opportunity and memories to write these stories. Without them, this project would not be possible.

## Process

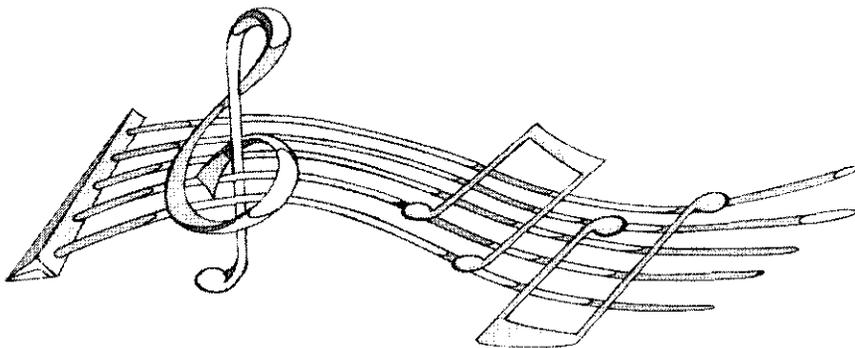
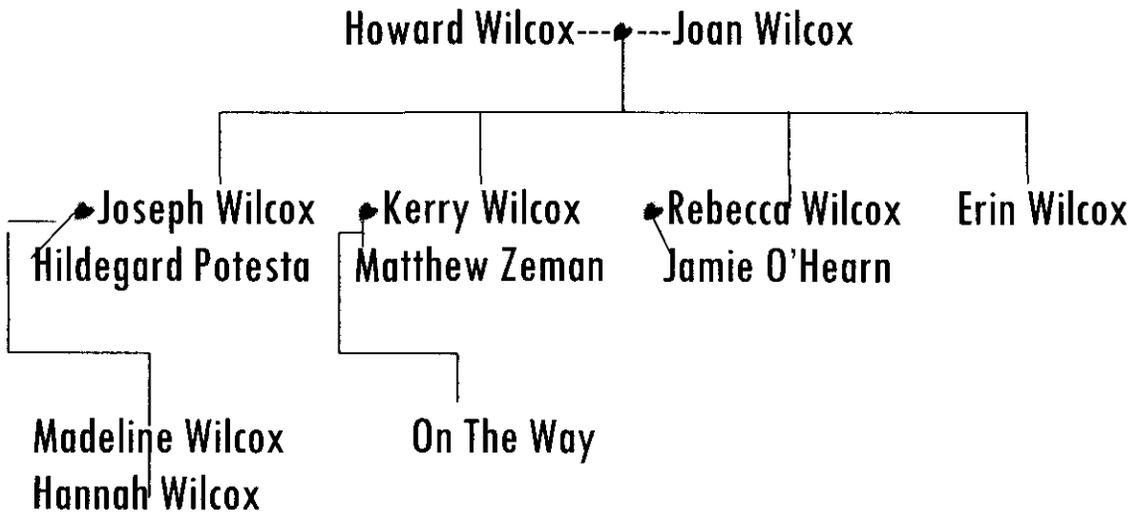
Before starting this project, I had to think of what I was interested in. I came up with the idea of writing memoirs about my family because I enjoyed doing so in Honors 199. I also tried to think of something else I could add to the stories to make them more interesting and that would tie the stories together. I had trouble coming up with this part until one day when I was listening to an old cd I had made. Almost all of the songs reminded me of someone in my family or my family as a whole. I could think of a specific scene for a few of them as well. Finally, I decided to make a list of songs that were important to me regarding the six members of my immediate family. After I had written down any song with even the slightest significance, I started to cut out ones that would be more difficult to write about, or that did not have a very specific story. I came up with fourteen songs that each had a favorite story of mine to go along with it. Then I began to gather the songs.

After I downloaded all the songs onto a computer, I made them into a cd. Before I started to write any story, I would play the song first to help me remember details of what I would say. I did not look through old picture books, call anyone for help, or have difficulty remembering any of the specifics. The stories I chose were clear enough in my mind that I could sit down and write them without struggle. I had had this idea for over a year and had been planning out a lot of the wording before I started. I chose to write about only the six of us because we are beginning to expand our family now. I thought that growing up with just us was such a good experience and I wanted to be able to remember it before we all made families of our own. I also tried to make the stories enjoyable for anyone else who might read them who did not know the kind of family we were.



# The Music of My Story Growing Up a Wilcox

With Songs and Stories About:



## Introduction

This collection of stories I have put together is composed of personal memories of my family and me. The concept of a family may vary from one person to the next, and relationships between members of a family may also differ. But as I come to the close of my years at Ball State, I realize more than ever just how important family can be, and has been, in my life.

I know how fortunate I am to have such a strong family background. In today's culture, it seems that divorce, drugs, and disagreements are common within families. We are, in fact, surrounded by dysfunctional families in our culture; maybe they are even the majority. Stepping back to look at my own family, I realize that we are unusual. We actually do enjoy one another's company and have always stuck together. If we have struggles, we work through them and keep each other on our feet. We have never let the norms of society turn us into a group of people who are merely a collection of blood relatives. We have countless memories, and bonds that continue to form and grow.

I started to wonder why that might be. One important thing that ties us together, I realized, is music. As I recall my childhood and young adulthood, I think of any number of songs that I associate with my family and relate to our happy and sad experiences. Now I have put fourteen sketches of my family together to create a testament to a loving, stable, and secure family from the perspective of the youngest child. My hope is that I have shown through my memories and songs a good example of how music and the traditions that grow up around it can provide a bond that keeps a family close and supportive, even in the midst of a culture better known for troubled than for happy families.

## “My Girl”

Joan Maier and Howard Wilcox were two typical high school students whose knowledge of each other led to nothing but love and happiness. Although my parents have no unbelievable “run-off-to-Vegas” type of story, their eyes turned toward each other on one particular night.

My mother and father graduated from the same high school that my sisters and I did. The building is different now, and the year was around 1961. The first party of the school year was going on and both Howard and Joan, not knowing each other, had attended. When I asked my dad if there was a specific reason why he remembers approaching my mom that night, he knew exactly why. “It was because she was dancing with her eyes closed. I could tell she had a lot of soul.” The song was “My Girl” and it is still, to this day, their song.

After one dance with him, my mom had to know who this guy was. He had the reputation of the cool new transfer student since everybody seemed to like him. The two of them didn’t talk again at the party, even though both were deeply interested to find out more.

The party ended and Joan and Howard both left with their own groups of friends. Surprisingly, the two cars met at an intersection about two blocks away from our family’s house today. There was an accident between them, which caused the car my mom was riding in to hit a brick building and a brick to fall out. About now is where my parents’ stories begin to differ. According to my mom, she began to walk home alone. My dad, with his cool friends and his own cool car, pulled up beside her and asked, “Are you hurt,

little girl?" She disregarded the concerned but patronizing remark with a simple "no," and continued walking. After I asked my dad to confirm this vivid memory of my mom's, he recalled the crash as being on a completely different night from the party. Also, Howard seemed to have picked Joan up in his car since her car was so badly damaged. These stories differed, perhaps because my dad remembers himself as being pretty cool--cooler than my mom remembers.

After they were so strangely introduced, they ended up having study hall together the next day. She was uncertain about my dad's fairly big ego in his interaction with his friends, but he had an interest in her that would not weaken.

For the next few weeks, he contacted her through her friends or waves in the hallway. My mom gave in, and they immediately started dating. I found this interesting only because they were never friends before they dated. So from the 60's up to today, they have always been romantically involved.

Their proposal and marriage story was simply an act of "everybody else is doing it, so why don't we?" They did love each other, so getting married was just the next step. My dad, now sometimes called Mickey, came to pick her up for a date. As he was on the way to her room, he asked Lilian and Joe (grandma and grandpa) if they would approve of the proposal. His next stop—my mom's room, where she stood with curlers in her hair not ready for company yet. The question was asked and answered and the marriage was in less than a year. Howard was 22, and Joan was 21. They have now been married for 35 years and are in love as if they were still in St. Benedict study hall. And in a box in my mom's closet there is a brick that was picked up the day after a car accident she claims "she will never forget."

This past summer, July of 2003, was my parents' 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. The family, now extended to eleven members instead of six, all met for a fancy dinner. Our gift was a framed picture of their wedding to add to the collection of wedding photos in our house. It has always included every important wedding in our lives, but none of my mother and father. It only seemed right after 35 years to add one. After dinner, we went to my brother's new house. He had to get a bigger place to live since he now has two daughters and will hopefully have more soon. Since it was warm out, we all sat in the yard and lit candles. We had some wine, but not so much to make us loud enough to wake the babies. For our second gift to our parents, we sat them down on the covered swing. My brother got out his guitar and began the melody of "My Girl." The four of us stood up and sang their song for them. They watched with smiles and even held hands.

Since "My Girl" was such an important song to my parents, it had to be played at their first child's wedding. When more than half the night was over and the guests had been dancing for hours, it came on. My parents danced the way they always do, with big smiles and very close. But for this one, I got to dance with my brother. He had been very busy greeting and dancing all night, as a groom should be. It was great that I got to have some of his time for myself. During the song, I asked him, "Are you having so much fun?" He answered, "Erin, this is the best night of my life!" The look on his face was as if he was in heaven and had been smiling for an entire day. Now, I tell people that "My Girl" is not only my parent's song, but mine and my brother's as well.

## “Save The Last Dance For Me”

We had all just finished eating dinner at The Nite Cap restaurant that was about ten minutes from our farm. It was Friday night, which meant it was “fish fry” night. We were in Palmyra, Wisconsin, where our weekend house was located. My dad owned horses, but other than that, the house wasn’t really farm-like. We just called it a farm. Almost every Friday, we ate at the same restaurant. There weren’t that many to choose from in our town, but we liked this place because of its “dinner table” type of serving. Their potato pancakes were awesome, too. After we ate, the little kids, or me and my sister, would get bored quickly. We never understood why the older people always wanted to stay and chat, so we would go outside to play. It was pretty dark out and there weren’t many buildings to light the streets. But somehow, that made it more interesting. We would sneak around, making up some sort of game rather than just walking outside. It never occurred to us that it might be dangerous to be outside at night alone and I don’t think it occurred to our parents either. Palmyra wasn’t that sort of town.

Behind the restaurant was a train track. We were never sure if trains actually ran on it anymore, but it was always our main attention-getter. We would first walk on the big outside rails as balance beams, putting our arms out so we wouldn’t fall over. We would talk about things like what would happen if we walked down the track forever. I also remember feeling the rails to check if they were hot. For some reason, that would excite us because it meant there had been a train here recently. We would also put our ears onto the rails to see if we could hear a train coming. It was probably likely that I said I could hear one, but who knows if I ever did. Finally, we got bored with the tracks

and went inside to see if the adults were almost done hanging out. They knew that we would be bothering them from then on, so we would go home.

Driving back, my dad would always turn on his brights since there weren't many cars out and we drove on small back roads through the woods. He would tell us, "Okay, look for eyes!" He told us that we could see animals' eyes light up on the side of the road if we looked carefully. I never saw any, but everyone else did. I still look sometimes when I'm on a similar road. Inside the house, we would get settled in and always play our music. There are songs that I can still hear and would remind me of no other place. "Save the Last Dance for Me" is one of them. We had a fireplace with a wooden crate built into the wall to keep our wood. We would sit around that since we had no TV, which is something my mom says was always a good idea. On the middle of the floor was a big bear rug with an actual bear head. And high up on the walls all around the main room were my dad's hats that he collected. He had one from almost everywhere he had ever been. The smell of our farm was like no other. It smelled like wood for the fire and leather from the saddles hanging near the bathroom. There were only three small bedrooms, but somehow there always seemed to be many more people spending the night. Looking back, the house was not very big, but I never noticed it when I was not very big myself. We sold the farm when I was about eight years old and bought our lake house in Michigan. The rest of my family got to enjoy my dad's horses while we grew up a lot more than I did. I always had to ride the one pony we had because I was small. If I got to ride a big horse, I had to have my dad walk us around the house and not on the trails. It seemed to me that right after we changed weekend houses, I got a strong interest for horses. My dad sold all the horses with the house, so I felt that I was cheated and

made sure to make my parents feel guilty about it. There are many pictures and memories from our farm and I will always remember the main parts of it, including the giant field out back where the horses roamed. It was more of a land for me, my sister, and my friends to live in. We could run so far through it that it was hard to see our house from the other side. I remember the grass and the dandelions and the area with the small bumpy hills. That was apparently where the snakes were, though we never saw one. The fence around the field was electric and we were always warned to be careful around it. But, I don't remember it ever being turned on. I remember not leaving it alone, however, and if it had been turned on, I would have gotten hurt.

Many things about the farm made me feel lucky for growing up there. One other memory I'll always have is our tree house, complete with a trapdoor. It was a place for hours to pass by in the summer days and for games to be created. The farm was unique, and like any other place I've been, I'll always remember the nights along with music. Certain songs will make me think of no other place.

## “Happy Happy Birthday to You”

Since I can remember, my family has always loved Disney. That doesn't mean we just loved Mickey Mouse. We loved Disneyworld, Disney toys, and Disney movies. We didn't have any favorite characters, we just loved them all. Many times while growing up, I went on vacation to Disneyworld. I remember being very young and experiencing it all for the first time with my whole family.

More clearly, I remember going once with just my mom. We watched the fireworks show at the closing of the Epcot park. My mom had been to these parks so many times and she knew all the tricks and I felt that she wanted to pass them down to me. She was wise enough to know that soon after the fireworks, the massive crowd of people would all be trying to get to the same place—the exit. She asked me if I was ready to run and keep my hand in hers, and I was. I would always trust my mom. She started running, darting in and out of both kids and adults, and I followed behind her. The park was huge and we did this for what seemed like ten minutes. We made it through and were some of the first people out. I thought that she was being generous and treating her youngest daughter to a vacation in a dream world, but I realized later that she most likely wanted to go as much for herself as for me. Another time, I went with my mom and my brother. As I recall, the three of us never really spent a lot of time together, so I enjoyed that trip even more. We did the basic routine of Disneyworld trips. We went to one park per day and never tried to cram them all together. And the Epcot fireworks are always a must. A few times I went with friends, but more recently, I went

with my mom and my two sisters. That was one of the more fun trips because we got to enjoy the night life of Disneyworld as well, and the four of us always get along.

Since Disney was always something we enjoyed, we had a small birthday tradition, as I like to call it. I can remember opening my eyes on the top bunk in the room my sister and I shared. It was finally my birthday and I could stop counting down the days! I would climb down, get dressed for school, and try not to be too loud. I didn't want to say anything to anyone about my birthday to see if they remembered, which of course, they always did. My mom would always be in the kitchen waiting for us to come down for breakfast. She would sit at the same chair at the kitchen table every morning. Beside her would be a cup of coffee and in front of her would be the newspaper. My dad would always be at the same table in the chair directly across from my mom. He would be sitting the same way, but instead of coffee, he would have food. I came down the stairs and knew they could hear me. I got so excited because I was ready for them to make a big deal. I also couldn't wait to get to school so I could get home faster and have my birthday dinner with all the presents! Today was for me and I was going to try not to forget that at any point during the day. If I did forget, I would quickly tell myself, "Hey! It's your birthday! Don't forget because it will be over in no time!" I walked in the kitchen ready for the attention. My mom turned around with a big smile on her face and sang the song she always sings. Unless it was time for the traditional birthday cake song, we sang it differently. Disney had its own birthday song that we had heard in a parade there once. We sang it that way for everyone's birthday in the morning and inserted our names into it as well. It went like this:

“Happy birthday! It’s (Erin’s) birthday! Happy, happy birthday to you!” (Clap clap)

It was so much more fun to sing than any other birthday song. Whoever had a birthday that day would most likely sing along, changing the “you’s” to “me’s”.

After a few times with the song, we would look to my dad because we knew what was coming next. No matter what, he would always tell us, “You are now the youngest (age)-year-old in the world!” That was his thing, finding it so clever of himself. The night before, he would also tell us that we were the oldest however-year-old, too. It made us smile. Without these two gestures from my mom and dad, a birthday would never seem complete.

## “Angel Eyes”

Looking out the car window, I saw a lot of fields. They were passing by quickly, but not as quickly as the car seemed to be moving when I looked at the road. I stared at row after row of crops that started to come alive and make designs more interesting than they really were. But as soon as I sat back for a minute, they would be back to normal—boring brown lines of grass. We were on a driving vacation to Mackinac Island off the coast of Michigan. Usually, when we took a road trip, it would be to somewhere in the southeast. It seemed as if we were always going down there and stopping at all the states in between at places like “The Mystery Spot” or “Rock City.” This vacation, for some reason, was just me, my parents, and my oldest sister. My dad was driving, putting on music that only he and maybe my mom would enjoy. My mom was in the passenger seat, but never with a map. It seemed that my mom and dad always just knew where we were going. No matter how far or how many different roads we had to take, they already had it all figured out before we left.

Since my sister was eight years older than me, she often tried to tell me what was cool or dressed me up in her clothes and make-up. Sometimes if her friends were over at the house, they would play with me because I was so little and cute to them. They would take turns swinging me with one person holding my right arm and leg and one person holding my left arm and leg. I would be swung over and over again in the upstairs room where there was a lot of space. Looking back, I don’t know why that would have been fun for them, but still remember it being fun for me. They would also make me sing for them. I would sing “Somewhere Out There” from An American Tale because everyone

used to tell me I sounded like the mouse from the movie. I would pretend to be embarrassed to sing for them, but really I was so proud and excited that I could make myself sound like the mouse. I liked all the attention, but probably only got it because I acted as if I were too shy.

As we were driving, Kerry was listening to her walkman. She had ABBA playing, one of her favorite groups. She turned to me and said, “Hey, you should learn this cool song.” I was always ready to learn anything cool from her, so I told her I would. My parents heard the idea and thought that it would be cute to hear me perform the song after I learned it completely. We made a deal that after I was sure of all the words, I would sing it for them and Kerry would be able to say that she taught them to me. So we got started. First, she let me hear the whole song. I liked it, but probably just because she did. I was always good at remembering things like lyrics to songs, so I knew it wouldn’t be too hard. Next, she would play one line at a time for me and make me repeat it while she would rewind the tape. Once I had each part memorized, I would have to go back and put all the lines together. It took a while and it was a little difficult since I was only about seven years old. When I was young, it always seemed like our car was so much bigger than it really was. I felt like there was room enough to move around, sleep, play, or anything I wanted since I was small. Kerry was sitting on the floor behind my dad’s driver seat and I was sitting on the seat right behind him, neither of us being squished at all. We were trying to keep quiet so as not to ruin the surprise for my parents, so we had to stay close. After learning all the way through the second verse, I was almost ready. Everything else was just being repeated, so I didn’t have to concentrate too hard on memorizing new words.

Finally, I was ready. Kerry was so proud that she had taught her little sister this song and now I was going to show it off to our mom and dad. We shouted, "Okay!" They turned down their music and turned around to watch as best as they could. Kerry gave me a countdown and all three of them were staring at me with big smiles on their faces. The music started. Although it was only my family, I suddenly got nervous. The part of the song began where I was supposed to come in and I was still sitting there quiet. I started wiggling my hands around my face and putting my head down, saying, "I don't want to." At the same time, the three of them started saying, "Why not?" "Come on, you've been working so hard!" "Kerry will be so mad if you don't." They tried and tried, but I decided to act embarrassed again and pretend that I didn't know the song. I made a big deal out of nothing, and regretted it for the rest of the trip. They finally gave up on me, and my sister was mad at me for a few minutes. Right away, I started singing it quietly to myself, completely confident of all the words, hoping someone would hear me. No one did; or they did and didn't want to give me a second chance. I wanted to show them I knew it, but knew that I had been a baby and thought I didn't deserve to try again. I never performed it, but listened to it the rest of the trip on my own headphones. To this day, I still know all the words of "Angel Eyes" and remember my sister working so hard to teach it to me.

## “Popsicle”

I was putting up my newest batch of posters that I had ripped out of a teen magazine on a space of wall by my bed. I shared a bedroom with my sister on the second floor of our house. We had loft beds that were different from bunk beds. The top bed was like a bunk bed, but the bed underneath stuck out perpendicular to it instead of being parallel. Somehow this arrangement made it so much easier to play games like “lift you with my feet from the top bed to the bottom” and “good hand/bad hand.” It was after school and my sister was on the floor looking through her trading cards while I taped up our “wallpaper” made of posters. We had been obsessed with New Kids on the Block for a few months now and so were all of our friends. We would buy any cheap magazines with picture of the boys in it, which was usually all of them since the group was so hot at the time. We had pictures plastered all over the wall to a point where I had to actually look for room to put up these new ones. They ranged from wallet sized black and whites to full sized individual posters of each one of them that took up one whole wall. We loved them. Between my sister and me, we owned the sleeping bag, the lunchbox, the dolls, almost all of their trading cards, rings, pins to wear on our jean jackets, and all of their tapes and videos. But there wasn't really a girl in school that didn't have all of that. Our favorite member of the group would change daily, but we swore every time that it wouldn't.

While Becky and I were in day camp together, there was a boy who looked like one of our very favorite boys in the band. He was more of Becky's age, so I never got to talk to him. But everyday after camp, I would ask her all about him. She knew I loved

him just as she and her friends did, so she would humor me. But one day, she told me that one of her friends was dating him. And they were so serious, being eleven. I was crushed. I had probably made myself believe that he was actually the boy from the band, not just a kid from camp. Later that night, I found Becky in the kitchen on the phone. She was obviously listening to someone talk, but motioned me over. She whispered, "It's him!" I was so excited. Not really for me, but just to know that he was on my phone with my sister. She had a friend with her that knew everything also. They hung up the phone and looked at me with big eyes and smiles. "Erin, he says he likes you and wants to break up with Kristi!" There was no way this wasn't a joke. I told them I wouldn't fall for it and that I knew that couldn't be true. He didn't even know me! But even after I told them, they kept swearing and swearing, which was a big deal. Maybe he did know who I was. He did know my sister and I did see him in camp every day. It took a while for them to convince me, but I believed it. All I know is that I must have stood there still with my mouth slightly open. They were going to call him back and I could talk to him. Oh my god, Joe McIntyre, I mean Chris from camp was going to talk to me. I remember that my sister and her friend had to hold the phone up to my ear for me because it was hard for me to move. They told him I was there and to go ahead. I heard a quiet boyish voice on the line say to me, "Erin, I like you. Do you like me?"

Softly, I answered, "Yes," and they took the phone away from my ear, laughing. I believed that it had really happened. Would I get to hold his hand tomorrow since we liked each other? I didn't know exactly what was happening or what I would do, but I was in a dream. On the way to camp the next morning, I asked Becky about Chris. She just laughed and told me that it had been her girlfriend on the other line using a boy's

voice. I had known it was too good to be true. I was embarrassed and hurt, but that was expected.

Another time, at Becky's birthday dinner, she opened her ending present that was always from dad. It was usually something small like an envelope or a box for a piece of jewelry so he could fit it in his pocket as a surprise. She opened an envelope and pulled out two tickets. "Oh my god, New Kids tickets!" she shouted as she jumped up and down with her best friend. I looked around to see if anyone had realized that I loved the New Kids just as much as Becky did! Why didn't I get any tickets for my birthday which had only been fifteen days before? I ran into the kitchen and cried. I had to go to the concert too, and I was determined to do whatever I could to get there. Finally, I cried long enough to get my way. My mom was going to buy another ticket and let me go along with them. I don't think my sister minded much, but maybe thought I was being a baby. She probably wished I hadn't come afterwards because during the whole show, I had to switch from riding piggyback on her to her friend's back. But while we were there, nothing else really mattered. I was young enough that I don't remember much of the show. But I do know that there was nowhere else I would have rather been at that time in my life, as I'm sure Becky felt too. And there would have been no one else I would have wanted to go with. We loved the New Kids together. On any afternoon, we would put their tapes in and know every lyric to every song, including their Christmas tape.

The group, surprising to us then, eventually broke up. They don't come out with new cd's or are ever seen or heard about on TV. But when I go through my closet and find the tape case, there is always something with New Kids on the Block on it. And a

few years ago, they came out with their greatest hits. There was no doubt that I was going to buy that. I hadn't listened to them for about ten years and I couldn't wait. Every song made me imagine my crowded bedroom filled with two young girls' things and being surrounded by the five boys' faces every night. It brought a huge smile to my face--not because of their great talent, but because I remember adoring them with my sister.

## “Matilda”

My parent’s music collection has more of a variety than any collection I’ve seen. Their music was always very necessary to have in life and we never went anywhere without some of it. When we sold the farm and bought the lake house, the collection only got bigger.

Their music was kept in a large, wooden cabinet with a flat top on which to put the stereo, some drawers, and a few cubbies. The bigger spaces were where they kept the record albums. This music was older than the rest, but by no means, not as good. I would look through these faded record covers and not recognize any of the names or pictures. But once they were played, they were immediately familiar to me from hearing my parents play them while I grew up. I could sing along just as well as they could. And it was the same for all of us. We never knew where my dad got some of the albums, like “Songs for Well Behaved Children,” but they were classics to us.

In the top drawer, we kept the cassette tapes. I rarely looked through these unless we were looking for our Fourth of July mix tapes. Our “Sesame Street in Harmony” tape was also there. It was probably never made into a cd because it was so old, but we would never lose that one. These two were usually the only cassette tapes we ever played.

Finally, our cd collection is the one that continues to grow. We have a two hundred cd changer, like a juke box. The music ranges from musicals to country to oldies to new number one hits on the popular charts. What we listen to during the days at the lake house is definitely an important decision. I can’t remember a time floating in the pool or playing board games when there wasn’t music playing. Someone usually brings a new favorite cd and plays it for the rest of us before we get to our favorites.

Many of the songs that I know from growing up are songs that I have learned from my dad. Sometimes in the morning, my sisters and I would wake up to some of his favorites blasting through the house. His favorites would change daily. But he would explain to us why these songs were so great and why we should know them. He enjoyed a lot of soul, but also some kinds of music that I wouldn't even know how to describe. "Matilda" is one of those songs. Others might be "30,000 Pounds of Bananas" or "Dead Skunk." I feel that they're songs that no one else besides my family, especially my dad, would know or understand. But because he exposed us to this music, it is now music that we will always love, too. And he can sing the lyrics completely wrong if he wants, because it is the memories of the music that matter.

## “Who Am I?”

If there is a musical showing downtown any time of the year, someone in our family will most likely have tickets to see it. We have always been a family who loves stage shows, especially with a soundtrack. The three “blue eyes” (my dad, Kerry, and me) enjoy them a little more than the three brown eyes (my mom, Joe, and Becky), but not by much. Usually the tickets come as Christmas or birthday presents. But sometimes my mom will just make sure we keep a certain date open because she has made plans to see the latest show that’s out.

The night will start with either a dinner at a restaurant or just meeting at my parent’s house. Everyone comes over dressed up, a little early so mom doesn’t get frantic about our being late. If anyone were ever late to an event, mainly church, that person was in the doghouse for the rest of the day, not to mention having frazzled mom for the day as well. Shows usually start somewhere around 7:30, so we would leave somewhere around 6:45 to be there with enough time to settle in our seats and maybe get a drink. My dad was always the driver for nighttime events. He would pull the car around to the front so we wouldn’t all have to get in the garage. We would drive a few minutes before passing the night life of Lake Shore drive. There were always constant lights and cars and noises. What better place than Chicago to see a live show? Finally after parking in a huge parking garage, we fought our way through the crowd of smokers outside and then through the crowd of people buying merchandise inside. The downtown theaters were always very old buildings with fancy, decorative interiors. They would mainly have red carpets and gold light fixtures. And most of the people there were dressed up so I always

felt that I should act proper when in a place like this. Finally, we would find our seats and browse through the playbills. Whispers and laughter were usually passed between us before the show actually started, and sometimes during the show as well. There was never a performance that didn't impress us and leave us humming the music at least for a few days.

One of my family's very favorite shows would have to be Les Miserables. I have seen it a total of three times and some of my family members have probably seen it more than that. I remember the first time my parents took me to see it because all my brothers and sisters had already experienced it and it was about time I did, too. I must have been younger than ten because the dress I wore was fluffy with yellow flowers on it. On the way there, my parents gave me the basic storyline of the show so I would not be completely confused. By the finale of the performance, I was in tears. I was so moved by the story and the live show and from then on, I claimed Les Mis as my favorite show ever. If we play the soundtrack of the show, which is often, there is a good chance that all six of us will be singing along.

"Who Am I?" is one of the classic songs of the play. The main character, Jean Valjean, has a very deep and distinct voice. Whenever my dad sings along with his solos, he tries to copy his same tone. In his mind, he does a very good job accomplishing this. The song is strong and proud and he enjoys pretending he is a man like Jean Valjean. If the phrase, "Who am I?" is ever mentioned in a conversation, it is likely that it may be repeated in the form of this song, along with the shouting of Jean's prison number—24601! This song captures my family's love for the performing arts, although any song from any show we've seen would do the same. And all of these songs would be found in

all of our personal collections despite the teasing we may get from friends. They sometimes found it funny that we could all recite a line from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat or Fiddler On the Roof. No one else ever seemed to enjoy musicals as much as my family did.

## “I Can See Clearly Now”

We had left in the early a.m. from Chicago to be able to arrive at our O'Hare terminal nice and early. My mom had made sure the night before that we had our bags packed and our outfits laid out. It was December, so we had to dress warm, but we also had to be able to adjust our clothes to accommodate to the warm weather when we arrived. Basically, we had to wear layers. After we had unhappily awakened to get our bathroom stuff together and run around making sure last minute things were taken care of, we heard the taxis beep. There were two because six of us, plus Mary Kay, our old babysitter and family friend, were going. The ride was long because it was cold and the sun hadn't risen yet. But we couldn't help but be excited about where we would be later that day. We had never been to Jamaica! We could only imagine. By the time we hung around the airport for a few hours and got everything done we needed to, it was time to board. I had been sitting in the waiting chairs with my new portable cd player and listening to music that I knew no one else would want to hear since I was ten. Finally, they called our seats. No one had been nervous about the plane since the day we made our travel arrangements until right now. My dad and I have never liked to fly, and at that moment, my thoughts were, “Well, here we go. I can't back out now and I am getting on this scary plane.” We walked down that walkway that leads to the door and it smelled the way it always does with the checkered carpet. I looked at my sister with wide eyes and clenched teeth in excitement. It seemed that the two of us were always together on family vacations. Sometimes someone would stay home or have to miss out on a trip, but Becky and I were always there and always together. We took our seats next to each other

and I got the window. We put everything away and couldn't help but be anxious for the plane to take off immediately. But it didn't, the way planes always take a while to leave even after everyone's boarded. Finally, we started to move.

It was 1992 and we were all on a plane on our way to paradise. The flight was just like any other. However, I do remember being able to see the shape of the state of Florida as we were soaring off above the ocean, leaving the U.S. I listened to my cd player or talked to Becky most of the time. Finally, we heard, "In about ten minutes, we will be reaching our destination, Negril, Jamaica." We could feel that we were getting lower because of our own stomach's dropping every few minutes, but we couldn't really tell by looking out the window. But we knew we were close. As we were landing, I saw things I've never seen become closer and closer. Becky turned to me and said, "Hey, listen to this song as we land." I put on her headphones and I heard the words, "I can see clearly now the rain is gone. I can see all obstacles in my way. Here is the rainbow I've been praying for. It's gonna be a bright, bright shiney day." As this was playing in what seemed like the soundtrack for my life since only I could hear it, it fit perfectly with what I saw. We were landing close to a beautiful beach with palm trees everywhere. The skies were beautiful blue and just the perfect amount of breeze was blowing. When we had entered the plane, we had been shivering from the cold, dark night in Chicago. Now we were here in this place that could only be described as flawless.

And the entire trip was pretty close to that, including the people. They were more friendly and generous than any people we had met. The music ran through our heads day and night and the food was amazing and always available. But the reality of the line, "it's gonna be a bright, bright shiney day" applied no matter what, and that was the

best part. We were out on the beach every day with the turquoise water that would gradually turn to deep blue. The clouds would sail by faster than any I'd seen. And the sand was never too hot or uncomfortable. There was plenty of shade under trees for those who wanted it, and plenty of room to move chairs onto the shore, also. I was glad that Becky had shared that song with me because whenever I heard it, I could close my eyes and imagine this place much clearer with its help. It said everything that I was feeling at every moment of the trip.

## “Piano Man”

We were all sitting around the fireplace in the living room after coming home from a nice dinner. When we were at our lake house in Michigan, we usually went out for dinner on the weekends. My sisters and I were going upstairs to change into warmer clothes, while my dad was feeding the dog whatever we had put together in the doggie bag. My mom would start cleaning up the kitchen, even though she hadn't cooked in it that night. There was not much to do in New Buffalo, and it was very dark outside the house, so we decided to make our own party.

My brother has “played” the guitar for several years now, and he always brings it along when he knows he'll have someone to sing with him. That usually ends up being my sister, while the rest of us sing quietly, hopefully being blocked out by her voice. Sometimes if I've had a few drinks, I'll join in and be as loud as she is. “Alright, I've got the guitar. What do we want to play?” my brother asks. Random songs are requested, but he plays whatever he's been working on lately. We start playing songs, working through their middles, and most likely quitting before the end because we get mixed up. There are a few songs, however, that we can all sing and my brother can play as well. The room had one big couch and whoever got to share it with my dad was lucky. Everyone else had a chair that wasn't as comfortable, but still fit with the room. My dad would sit on either end of the couch, never the middle, with his feet up and his after-dinner snack in his hand or in a napkin, munching and humming along at the same time. Finally, he would reach into his pocket. He would pull out a small silver harmonica from his pocket. He never really learned how to play it, but always had one available in times

like these. But no matter what song was playing or being sung, he always put the harmonica to his lips and played his best version of the opening melody of “Piano Man” by Billy Joel. That was really the only thing he did know how to play, and it wasn’t always perfect. The funny part was that he believed that it was perfect. He placed his hands on the harmonica the way professionals do, and made his face look as if he were concentrating. If we made any sort of comment, he would just play it again, trying to prove that he did know what he was doing. It did always get better.

“Billy Joel music just always puts me in a better mood.” My sister was commenting on how we have all grown up on Billy Joel for some reason, and how we all admire him. This is weird because we don’t always have the same taste in music. We were on our way to our 10<sup>th</sup> concert of his, it seemed. And there was not a single show we would rather see. Inside, the arena was filled with people walking this way and that. There were stands everywhere selling shirts, cd’s, and posters. We didn’t need the cd’s because we owned every one and his songs were already stuck in our heads from the car ride. We found our seats and patiently waited for the lights to go out. When they did, it was like waiting for someone we had known all our lives, but never yet met. But with all the screaming fans and huge stage, it was also the reality of waiting for a huge star that everyone there seemed to feel the same about. The first sound was just a loud ongoing bass and we were staring at the stage to see where he would come out from. “Oh my god, oh my god” was all we kept saying. Sometimes we wondered if people around us might think we were crazy and a little overexcited since we never sat down even when

everyone else did. Finally, the show began and a real song started. At that moment, there was nothing better in the world. We simply shook our heads at his greatness. And no matter where or when we've seen him perform, we always know when the show is ending. He sits down at his piano, and we hear the opening melody for "Piano Man." This is always his last song. We sing along, which turns out to be more of shouting than singing. At the end, we are so moved and in love with this man's music, that we may be amazed by him the whole ride home, commenting on each song. "Next time we go to the lake house, we are definitely putting on Billy Joel's Greatest Hits first."

## “Kiss Off”

It was one of those parties that was big enough that we had to move the dining room table over to make a dance floor. Those were the parties at our house that were usually the most fun. It started with my brother and ended with me. When all of us children of the family were in our teenage years and still living at home, we threw parties. Mom and dad went out of town a lot or would go to the lake house for a weekend. When they were gone, we always took full advantage. Friends usually enjoyed our parties the most because we had a lot of room and because of that dining room dance floor. When anyone walked in the front door, the living room was on the left and the dining room was right after it. It was always the nicest looking room because of the wooden floor and the built-in china cabinet. The walls were maroon with a grayish border. On the left underneath a stained glass window was my dad's desk. He had a business lamp on it and pictures of buildings stuck under the glass top. He never sat at it, but it's where we kept important things like restaurant menus and stamps. Across the room was the china cabinet. The dishes that we used for birthday dinners and holidays were kept there, and no one ever knew how they were arranged except my mom. On the countertop area of it were 8 x 10 pictures of everyone in the family. They consisted of school photos, sorority photos, and glamour shots. Just recently, we added one of all of us including my brother's wife and their first baby. The picture of my brother alone was from when he had been eighteen years old. He has never got a new one taken, so it was about time he was in a recent one. Plus, we needed one of the whole family together. Underneath the countertop of pictures were more cabinets and drawers. The one on the left was our liquor cabinet that was not to be touched by any of the kids. There was a key to open it

that always hid behind one of the photos, but we all knew where it was. And to use it, you just had to stick it in the keyhole and pull. There was no secret or trick to it. The middle drawer was the “art drawer.” That was where we kept our paper, glitter, glue, etc. We never really use that drawer anymore, but it seemed to be a favorite place to play when we were young. Finally, the big table in the middle of the room was mainly for fancy dinners. We pulled it open and added a middle part to it for special occasions. This was when our table cloths and candles got their use. But on a night like this when we were planning on partying, it was shoved aside to the wall across from the desk.

Tonight was the first time the whole family would be at the party and it wouldn't be a secret from anyone, especially mom and dad, because they were there too. It was sometime during Christmas break when everyone was home from school or just visiting mom and dad's house more often because of the holiday. The stereo next to the desk always got used to its full ability. A variety of music played all night, and the dj's switched frequently. Music was so important to our parties that we would have a few cd's or tapes made ahead of time with our own party music to make sure there was never silence. Once when Becky was taking the dj position, she accidentally stopped the music. Joe, being a brother, threw something at her and made her cry. We couldn't have the music stop!

Joe decided that for this party, he would get his guitar out for a while and we could sing and dance. He was just learning and he had been practicing this great song. The song was “Kiss Off” by Violent Femmes, and it started with a fast, sloppy guitar part that sounded pretty easy. I thought that might be why he had been trying to learn it. He put the song on the stereo and played along with it. He didn't sing very well, but sang

anyway, which was okay with us. The song started and we danced and sang along with our close friends who were there too. The chorus of the song had a small background part that someone needed to sing for Joe. My sisters and I immediately stood next to him and started to be the background vocals for him. I had never heard the song, but quickly picked it up and didn't want to be left out, so I sang. We had turned it into a show! The next part of the song had a countdown from 1 to 10. For each number, my sisters and I held up that many fingers and pushed our hands forward in sync with the music. Joe continued to sing, loving our assistance. I found out afterwards that he was learning this song because it was an angry love song and he felt that way about his girlfriend at the time. You could tell by the expression on his face that he wasn't just playing a favorite song, but feeling it as well.

My mom thought that we were all so cute and fun with our little performance. Soon after that, we visited my uncle in New York. She had us perform it again for him, which he loved because he was very musical also. That song definitely became one of my favorites and will always remind me of us, especially my brother.

## “America”

It was the Fourth of July. We had just gotten back from the Glascott’s annual Fourth of July party. There was always a basketball tournament there that we were too scared to join because the boys played rough. It was way too serious for us anyway.

We were in Michigan, once again, because it was summer and we could enjoy the fireworks along the beach. The sun was setting. We were still in the house, showering and getting a little snack before we left. We knew we would be in for a long fun night. The coolers were brought out and everyone got to put in whatever their beverage of choice would be. We had to pack our necessities because the beach was across the street and down about a hundred stairs. Someone made sure to grab at least one flashlight to get back home at the end of the night. We also brought a few chairs and blankets so we wouldn’t have to sit on the cold sand when the sun went down.

Finally, everyone had something in his or her hands. If not, my mom made sure they would find something to carry. We started walking. It was warm enough to wear shorts and a T-shirt, but there were too many mosquitoes not to cover up. We stepped across the rocks in our driveway out onto the street. The sun was almost gone so we saw the bright orange rays straight ahead and behind the lake in the distance. Looking down the road, we saw nothing but trees and a few hidden houses. We crossed the street and walked through a path that usually had the most bugs because it was about ten feet of brush. Finally, we passed the small five houses that were right before the stairs. Carrying all our stuff down them would be the hardest part, but once we were down them, it was time to relax. We set it all up and began to work on the fire that we had gathered wood for earlier in the day. The fireworks had already started and they were

going off to the left and right of us. The sun was set now, but the moonlight was almost as bright. It bounced off the lake water so much that it looked like there were two moons. The waves were small, but still made the perfect amount of noise. Along them, there were booms and whistles coming from all directions. Different colors and shapes were in the sky right next to us and as far down the beach as we could see. They lasted the entire night and into the early morning.

While we were enjoying the show of lights on our own private beach, we were having so much fun together, as always. Stories were told, jokes were shared, and sometimes songs were sung. We had our drinks, but the night was not complete without one more thing. For the Fourth of July, we had made our own soundtrack. Once, while we were in Disneyworld, we noticed that their fireworks were set to music. It was one of the coolest things we remembered about our trips there. So one year, we decided to make a tape of “America music” that we could listen to while we watched our own fireworks. Everyone helped get a good collection together. The tape included “The Star Spangled Banner,” “God Bless the USA,” and “Glory, Glory, Hallelujah,” along with many others. We had never known there were so many songs about our country. For our party on the beach, which consisted of usually just the six of us and a few friends or spouses, we would play our tape. The songs mixed with the atmosphere made this holiday mean more to me than it ever had. Especially after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, some songs even brought a tear to my eye. I had never been so proud to be an American. But no matter what, we always had a grand finale song. My dad had been a big fan of Ray Charles for a long time. There was a version of “America” that he sang that had spirit and soul to go along with the night. We saved this song for last only because of how great it was. My dad

would sing along with it and imitate Ray's voice as best he could. We all knew the words to the song, but we knew this version the best, including the "I'm talkin' about" and "ya know" additions he sang. The fourth of July was one of our favorite holidays. When we had the idea for the tape, we had made this holiday that much better. We could enjoy each other, the fireworks, the beach, and of course, the music.

## “One More Sleep ‘Till Christmas”

Christmas, as it is to many families, is special to my family in our own way. For years while the four children all still lived in the house, Christmas morning was the most thrilling time of the year. The thought of going up to the third floor to see ten times the amount of presents that were there the night before was more exciting than anything else. The Christmas spirit had been building up since the day after Thanksgiving. In school, the prayer services were more frequent for the Advent season and there was often a Christmas singing show at the end of the semester in the gym. Everything was shown in the gym because we didn't have an assembly hall or an auditorium. There was one gym for the entire school, including the high school.

At home, the familiar annual decking of the halls was taking place. The tiny village was set up on the dining room cabinet. The white lights were hung on the front porch, the bushes, and all the windows. We never used color lights because my mom thought the white ones were prettier. The Christmas cards we had received in the mail were hung on the stair rails, sometimes all the way up to the top. The ones with pictures were hung near the bottom so everyone could see them. The pictures of buildings were taken down and replaced with bears in stockings or wreaths. The bathroom towels were switched from plain to Christmas patterns. And finally, the real tree was brought from the backyard all the way up to the third floor. My parents usually brought the tree up the stairs themselves unless someone's guy friend was visiting that day. Then the friend was told to help with no complaints tolerated. Decorating the tree was usually the girls' job. We would haul the boxes of ornaments up from the basement (or mom would do it for

us) and begin opening each one individually. “Hey, remember this one?” It seemed that everything we pulled out of the box had a story to go along with it. They had been collected over the years starting from the first tree my mom and dad ever got together as a married couple. In more recent years, my sister and I insisted that we watch The Muppet Christmas Carol while we decorate the tree. The Muppets had always been another favorite of ours. We had grown up with them and would always laugh at their comedy without fail. Sometimes we were even told that we were muppets ourselves by people outside of the family. This usually meant that we were being extra goofy and dangly in our movements, as if we were on strings or a stick. Their Christmas album with John Denver was the most popular music in our house at Christmas time.

When it was time to bake cookies, the girls gathered in the kitchen. We sat within the big yellow walls around the big white table. The bay window faced the backyard and allowed us to watch the snow falling. We sat around the table drinking hot chocolate that was actually hot and mixed with no lumps. It was only that way because our mom had made it for us and only moms can make things just right. While we were rolling the dough or shaking on the sprinkles, we always had Christmas music playing on the stereo in the dining room. The smell of Christmas filled the entire first floor. It was cold, but we didn’t mind because it was Christmas cold. We had our slippers and sweats on, anyway. From the stereo, we would put on three cd’s and hit shuffle for a Christmas mix. But our favorites were always the Muppets. There was one song, “One More Sleep ‘Till Christmas” that meant a little more to us than the rest. Since we found the second Muppets Christmas album, we had to play this song every Christmas Eve before we went to sleep. And to hear it anywhere besides the dining room at Christmas time wouldn’t be

right. That song and any of the Muppets Christmas songs meant being at home with my family when everyone was home from school and could spend the day drinking tea and snuggling under the blankets. When Christmas Eve would finally arrive, we would spend the evening eating a big dinner while listening to soft carols in the background. The immediate family was there, which added up to about fifteen people at the most. We like our holidays personal and close. Everyone sits at the same dinner table. At midnight, we would go to mass to end the night with the real meaning of Christmas. During “Silent Night,” my mom would always cry. And now that the rest of us were all grown up, we would shed a tear or two also just because we knew how emotional it made our mom. Finally, after our walk across the alley back to our house, we played our song and went to bed.

“There’s magic in the air this evening, magic in the air.

The world is at her best, ya know, when people love and care.

And everyone can feel it, the feeling’s running deep.

After all, there’s only one more sleep ‘till Christmas.”

Christmas morning before everyone grew up and moved out was a memory I’ll never forget. One by one, the four kids would wake up and crawl into our parents’ bed. We were a family of only six still (before anyone had grown up and gotten married), and as soon as we were all shoved into the queen size bed, we were ready to run upstairs. It was always the most exciting for the two younger girls (my sister and I), but the spirit of Christmas would run through us all just the same as it still does. And no matter how old we get, the Muppets will always be our favorite Christmas music.

## “Austin Powers Theme Song”

It was the beginning of the wedding reception and everyone had taken a seat. The room had dim lighting and large windows overlooking the city. The dance floor in the center area of the room seemed like it might be too small, but later turned out to be perfect. The bridesmaids and groomsmen had already been introduced and walked through the tall doors at the side of the room. Their names had been announced on a microphone by the D.J. who didn't know any of them, but sounded just as excited to see them. The parents already also proudly strutted through the doors as if showing off their children who would be passing through the doors after them. Finally, everyone who had been so excited and family that had been so emotional heard the words, “Introducing Mr. and Mrs. Joseph and Hildegard Wilcox!” The doors opened and there they were holding raised hands. Because the two of them were known for being a little goofy, they wanted to walk in to their reception a little differently. They had a “walk in” song picked out that they decided on just shortly before the reception. The opening music for “Austin Powers” began playing and they did their best to dance like the scene in the movie, dressed in their wedding gown and tuxedo. I remember thinking how cool my brother was because although I might have thought of an idea like this for myself, I don't know if I would ever go through with it. Everyone laughed, clapped, and took their seats. The rest of the night was filled with running around and a lot of drinking and celebrating. And for every song, at least one person would say, “Oh, we have to go dance to this, I love this song!”

My brother, my mother and I were sitting in my living room. “I can’t believe you’ve never seen Austin Powers 3. We’re watching it. It’s so much better than the first two.” Joe made me sit down and watch the movie from beginning to end. I didn’t mind it much because hearing Joe laugh always makes me think that something must be really funny. The movie was so much more amusing to me because he was watching it, too.

The next weekend was Halloween. My sister and I went to one of her friend’s parties. We hurried in from the car because it was pretty windy and cold. You could tell it was Halloween even without all the people in costumes because of the smell in the air and the wet leaves on the ground. We walked in and saw our friends all dressed up. Some had been really creative and obviously spent time on their costumes, like the American Gothic portrait couple that stood in front of a frame that hung from the ceiling. Some had put their costume together that night it seemed, like the “motorcycle enthusiast” who wore a leather jacket. On Halloween, there always seemed to be people at the parties who didn’t know anyone. And for some reason, that was okay on Halloween. After a while, we saw an “Austin Powers” come in. “Cool, look at Austin Powers, Beck. Who is that?” The guy, whoever he was, was fully dressed as Austin and doing the dance as he entered. He was not just dressed as Austin, but WAS Austin. But that style of dancing looked familiar to my sister and me so we looked a little closer. The teeth were fake and the wig looked real, so it was hard to tell. But once we heard his voice and his awful accent, we realized, “That’s our brother!” Joe had come to our party! We had forgotten how much he loved Halloween and how he tried to make an appearance at every party possible. The costume was a hit and later that night we danced Austin Powers style down the streets of Chicago, crashing random parties. Some people enjoyed the leap along

with a “yeah, baby” in their face, but others had less of a sense of humor. After that night, Joe tried hard to find an Austin Powers ring for his cell phone, which he eventually got.

## “Someone Saved My Life Tonight”

Sometimes a song’s lyrics seem like they were specifically made for your life. There may be a line or two that give you chills when you hear them because they are so close to something you can relate to. At the Billy Joel and Elton John concert this past summer, Kerry Wilcox found that to be true.

My sister has always seemed to have trouble in love. She has found happiness before, but never in a relationship that lasted. As a freshman in high school, she dated a senior. When she was eighteen, she was engaged for a few days--with disapproving parents. And from then on, she has had many decent and likable boyfriends. A few Christmases ago, the four girls of the family had taken a trip to Disneyworld. While waiting for our bags, Kerry sat with a thoughtful and determined look on her face and said to me, “I’m going to find my husband this year.” And this time, in 2002, it was looking as if maybe she had found him! Matt was the guy, and the two had been dating for a short while. They were both ready to settle down, so we knew the potential for their getting married.

The family was sitting at the lake house, going in and out from the pool to the kitchen all day. Whenever a car would arrive, we would jump up in excitement, hoping it was Kerry and Matt. Today was the day that he was proposing to her as a surprise while we all hung out at the lake house. Afterwards, they were going to meet us there to celebrate with the rest of the family, who already knew. Waiting, my other sister and I made a “congratulations” sign to hang for them to see when they walked in. It had very badly drawn stick figures of Kerry and Matt and a helicopter with a face. He was taking her on a helicopter tour of Chicago and proposing while in the air. The rest of us were

discussing how we thought it might be going and moved on to how their wedding and even kids might look. Finally, they arrived. Cheers were shouted and hugs were given. The men joined in the celebrating, but only with handshakes and cigars. The proposal went smoothly and the engagement was hopefully going to work the same.

Sometime within the next few months, things unfortunately did not work out. The engagement was sadly, but understandably called off. It was about the same time that Kerry and I were at the concert. A certain song came on that we had always known, but never really listened to. He sang,

“Someone saved my life tonight, sugar bear.  
You almost had your hooks in me, didn’t ya dear?  
You nearly had me roped and tied-  
Altar bound, hypnotized.  
Sweet freedom whispered in my ear,  
‘You’re a butterfly’ and butterflies are free to fly,  
Fly away, high away, bye bye”

It was almost scary how well these words went along with what she had been feeling and what we had all been feeling for her lately. Matt had almost got to keep her, and they were headed for the altar. Now, once again, she was as free as a butterfly because for one reason or another, this relationship didn’t work out either. We both looked at each other and knew this would be her song from now on. Since this was an emotional concert already, we probably shed a tear or two as well. She was free again and it was for the best—at least for right now.

Somewhere between then and now, Kerry and Matt worked things out. They ended up running off to New Orleans and eloping. They purchased a brand new ring and dress to symbolize a brand new engagement and marriage. And in the opinion of everyone who knows her, they both fit her style much better. They now live close to the rest of us and are expecting their first child.