

Ashley's Music

CAROLINE (78)

The other day, my little eight year-old granddaughter Ashley wanted to play me some of her favorite music. She popped a shiny new CD into the stereo... I never could get used to those things... and told me what a great song it was.

Now 'great song' is a term I associate with Benny Goodman, Frank Sinatra, or maybe even the Platters. It is not a term I would use to describe what began pouring out of those speakers.

To me, it sounded like someone was torturing a camel with a chainsaw. Talk about noise! There were guitars screeching and people screaming and electronic junk I couldn't ever hope to identify... and that was screeching, too! I couldn't even understand most of the words that were being shrieked, but those that I could pick out would make my cousin Leo blush... and he was a sailor in the merchant marine!

My head was jiggling like a bag of Jell-O on a roller-coaster. While in the middle of all that shrieking and screeching and screaming sat my 8 year-old grandchild, smiling like she had just been kissed by an angel. There was little Ashley tapping her tiny black patent leather shoes to that ear-shattering noise as if it was Tommy Dorsey's band in all its musical splendor.

Well, after what seemed like three hours, the four minute song finally ended and I could actually hear myself think again. I grabbed Ashley's hand in mine and escaped into my room. I figured it was time the poor child was introduced to the finer points of Western Civilization. I sat her on the bed and blew the dust off my old collection of 45's and 78's. Vintage vinyl, I told her. From the days when a record was a record, not the third and fourth letters of the alphabet. I told her to sit back and listen to songs that actually meant something... with lyrics crafted by songwriters who knew how to squeeze pure love from the English language.