

Summer Sundays

“Are we going to the concert tonight, Mama? Can we buy some popcorn for a snack while we listen to the band?”

Like most summer Sunday evenings, I am packing our cooler—ham sandwiches for my husband and me, and peanut butter and jelly (sans crusts) for the kids. We load the car and head to the center of town, where we stake out the perfect spot to sit on the “Green”—a plot of lawn reserved for bandstand concerts, an old fashioned ice cream social each June, and come wintertime, caroling and snowman making. I love it here. Surrounded by hundred-year-old maples and pines, I am shaded from the summer sun and the hassles of modern life. Here, there is evidence of a simpler time: concrete horse troughs, filled now with bright pansies, still flank the red brick clock tower. Overhead, there is an absence of visible power lines, thanks to some careful planning by our town’s forefathers, who buried the lines deep beneath the earth in a successful effort to preserve the natural landscape. This space even smells green. The warm summer breeze holds scents of clover and honeysuckle, precious gifts of the season.

As the band begins a Glenn Miller tune, I pass out the sandwiches, then sit back and take it all in. Hundreds of people gather on the lawn, happily toe tapping and picnicking. Diaper-clad babies toddle along next to folks from the retirement community, spreading smiles all around. Perhaps these children are entertained by several couples who have vacated their chairs, preferring to dance to the up-tempo tune in

the street. I marvel at my own two girls, quietly munching on buttery popcorn sold by some enterprising Boy Scouts. Lulled by the Big Band beat or the summer heat (or both?), they seem unusually content. My husband reaches for my hand, and as we sit, I find it easy to follow Ralph Waldo Emerson’s advice: “Write in on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.” Okay, maybe not every day. But definitely Sunday evenings in Hudson, Ohio.

Now, more than ever, I seem to need green space in my life — a time to reconnect with the past and take a breath from the modern world. Like summertime itself, the era of bandstand concerts could be fleeting. I wonder how live polka and disco can compete with the fast-paced modern world, where music is downloaded in a flash, then deleted the next instant. Will the next generation know the feeling of a warm summer breeze and the sounds



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of cool jazz? Or will all this become a useless relic, like the now-defunct clock tower troughs?

When my daughters ask, “Are we going to the concert?” the answer will always be yes. We will return each Sunday, picnic in hand, doing our part to cherish this simple gift of summer.

Stefanie Wass’ essays have been published in The Christian Science Monitor, the Akron Beacon Journal, and four “Chicken Soup for the Soul” anthologies.

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