Grandma: “Music was always just a part of our life, and I listened to the radio and to disc jockey’s all the time on radio, and then when I got my record player I played them over and over and…Johnny Ray came out. He was an unknown and he made two records. The first one was “Cry” and the second one was “A Little White Cloud That Cried…”

Steph: [chuckles]

Grandma: And they were MONSTER hits. They played on the radio all day. [soft music, “A Little White Cloud That Cried” beings to play] And, Uncle Dick was going to Penn State and he was studying German. He was very smart and he never had to study before but he had to study for this German. And he came in, nicely…I had played it like fifty times in my room…and he came in and asked me to turn it off. And of course I played it louder. [volume of music goes up louder] He came in and took the record off the record player and broke it over my head! [Steph and Grandma both laughing]. I’ll never forget it. And I screamed “Muuummm!” And he had to buy me a new one. But, I would play the same song over thirty-five times, just typical teenager. You know, you had your favorite songs and you just played them over and over and over and the rest of the time you had the radio on. It was just always a part of my life.

[Johnny Ray song fades and Benny Goodman song fades in and out, then Frank Sinatra song fades in]

Grandma: I could’ve gone on any music show and won a thousand dollars like that [she snaps her fingers] because I knew every big band. I knew every singer of every big band. I being the youngest by many years had a lot more than my brothers and sisters, plus the fact that I was raised during the war years where my father was making more money than he ever made in his life and they only have one child at home instead of five. And so, I had the first record player of my own when I was twelve probably, and I got a hi-fi when I was fifteen, I probably had between 5 and 800 records [Sinatra song fades out, Ink Spots song fades in]. I mean, I just bought records all the time.

Grandma: Yeah, I went to see the Ink Spots. The only time in my life I ever played hooky. And went to see the Ink Spots. [Ink Spots song fades out, Ella Fitzgerald song fades in]. I saw Ella Fitzgerald.

Steph: How did you even learn the jitterbug? [Ella Fitzgerald song fades out; jitterbug fades in]

Grandma: Ummm. I don’t know. Mostly, probably…I probably got really good when I started dating your grandfather. We jitterbugged in school but we never had any lessons, per se. You just kind of listened to the music and did your own thing, you know, made up steps. But he had steps. He had regular jitterbug steps, and when I started dating him, then I could dance. I was able…I couldn’t play an instrument but I could dance! [Steph and Grandma laugh] So, we just danced very well together. [jitterbug fades out]

Grandma: [different jitterbug song fades in] Dancing was very big in my era. There was a dance every night of the week somewhere. Sunday night we’d go to the Slovak club and Monday night we’d go to the Vets and Tuesday we’d go here or there. Some of the dances would hold competitions for the jitterbug. And I never wanted to do it and grandpa always insisted. “We’re goin!” You know. And it was….yeah. Different places. Big dance halls. [jitterbug fades out and Bobby Darren song fades in] And they would say, ok there’s going to be a two step competition, there’s gonna be a samba competition, there’s gonna be a jitterbug competition, and we always won the jitterbug. And he just had a natural rhythm and he started dancing, and he was very good. He liked “Mack the Knife” with Bobby Darren a lot too, we always danced to that. Glenn Miller’s music…he would just not sit [Bobby Darren song fades out, Glenn Miller song fades in].

Steph: [Glenn Miller song fades out] The thing that really shocks me is when, when I gave you that music and we’ve been exchanging music…that you like so much modern stuff. [Dr. Dog song fades in]

Grandma: Some.

Steph: Well a lot more than most people of your generation, I would say.

Grandma: Oh, really?

Steph: Dr. Dog, and Andrew Bird. [both laugh]

Grandma: I played them today.

Steph: [laughs] I know! And Feist, I mean…[Feist fades in]

Grandma: I really like Feist. I really like her because she reminds me a lot of, you know, a singer from our time. But, Andrew Bird, I don’t like everything he does but I like some things he does.

Steph: [Feist fades out] Yeah. But even the fact that you’re willing to…that you want to know more music and you’re looking for it and it’s enjoyable to you…[Andrew Bird fades in] most people, at least other people I’ve interviewed about their listening habits, they, after their teenage years they kind of stop. That’s the music they listen to even now. Like they don’t really move beyond that. But I just was curious about…

Grandma: Well you have moved me than I would’ve moved myself.

Steph: [laughs]

Grandma: You know, I probably would’ve never gone out and bought these, but the fact that you were willing to make them made me want to listen to them and I discovered I liked them. I just simply liked them. And, why do I play? Because if I get up and I’m feeling a little down and I put on some music it makes me feel better. I find myself dancing around the kitchen. It just helps my moods.

Steph: I automatically feel better when I put on music that I like.

Grandma: [Andrew Bird song fades out] Uh huh. Me too. [Steph chuckles] Yeah. It really does help me. And it was very, very hard the first winter or two after grandpa died.

Steph: Yeah.

Grandma: Because summer, there’s people in and out and the doors are open and you hear the lawnmowers. But in the winter, the whole house is shut and it’s like you’re in this island all by yourself. And I just started playing music as loud as I could and it made me feel better. [Peggy Lee song fades in]

Steph: When we exchange and I’m giving you stuff from now and you’re dropping these names and I’m listening to Peggy Lee now…generation gap’s just close.

Grandma: Uh huh. [Peggy Lee song fades out and leads into a musical collage of Nirvana, the Beatles, Outkast, John Fred & His Playboy Band, and Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell]

Grandma: It was just always a part of my life. [the Beach Boy’s “God Only Knows” fades in and slowly out]