

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

### **Chapter 11 - The Piano (age 9 and up)**

At my favorite place, MomMom has an old upright piano. She tells me that it used to be an old “player” piano. There is a ragged John Thompson music book for older beginners. I learn to read the notes. I find the keys on my own. It takes me a few months and some encouragement to learn to play “Long, Long Ago”. MomMom loves it. She wants me to play “Beautiful Dreamer”. It takes me a shorter time to play that one.

Mother is excited. Father seems to like the music. Mother wants me to take lessons. “Ok”, I say, not knowing what I am getting into. She takes me to a very old woman’s house south of town. Ms. C was not my ideal teacher, but I paid some attention. Brother took lessons there too.

My finger exercises reminded me of drawing cursive writing ovals. I did not like practicing finger drills. I have songs to play. The only reason I enjoy going to Ms. C’s house is that she has baby ducks running around. I talk her out of one or two to take home. I raise them in the backyard.

I am very frustrated with the constraints of practice scales and finger exercises. I know that I probably need it. I am resentful of having to go to Ms. C’s every week. I take it out on the piano. I find a book of matches and try to light one of the legs on fire. The leg was reluctant to burn. Father comes home. The belt comes out and it hurts.

I decide to play songs that I like. I find a book of Stephen Foster songs. I love the melodies. Father likes “Ole Black Joe”. I do not pay attention to lyrics. I play for the melody and harmony.

Later, in Junior and High school, I change piano teachers to a gentleman on the northwest side of Roswell. He wants me to play ‘classics’. I learn a few: [Solfeggietto](#), [Prelude in C# Minor](#), [Clair de Lune](#) and several more . In return, he agrees that I can play more popular songs: Autumn Leaves, Theme from the Apartment, Theme from Exodus, Under the Double Eagle. My recitals bring in a crowd. Teacher cries every time I play Moonlight Sonata.

I play for the high school queen coronations FFA, FHA, and other events. I attain some popularity with the west side Anglos. During this time, I have not related my East Side Walnut residency as affecting my social status.

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I begin working as a sacker at Safeway at the age of 15. I want a car. Cars cost money. Working after school and on weekends takes away time from piano practice.

Gradually, I stop playing during my college years except occasionally ripping out the double chromatic from “Autumn Leaves” just to impress. I start again in 1966 but I do not remember many of my old pieces. I start free play. Melodies form.

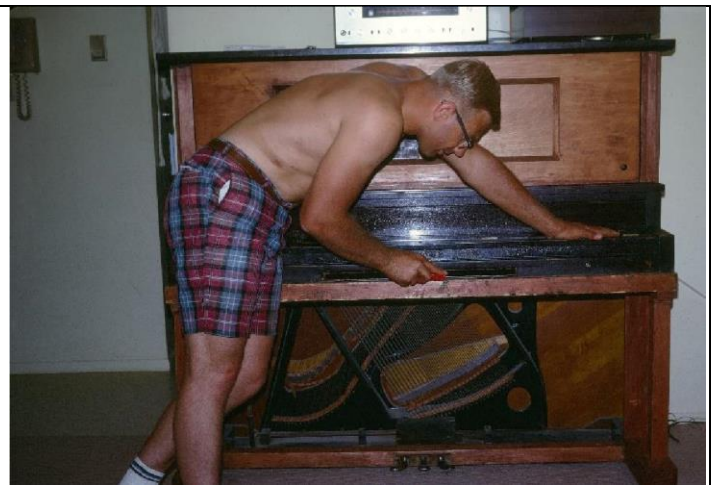
I develop a few of them and record them in 1967 on a simple cassette recorder. It satisfies my need for music.

Again, I stop playing until 1986 when, after meeting my soulmate, something turns on the need to express my feelings through the keyboard. I compose some more complicated melodies and record them in 1988.

My fingers have limits now after a bout with rheumatoid arthritis in 2017. I still sit down occasionally, and after a few minutes of tinkering, I can sometimes play the basics of a new melody. If I do not turn on the recorder on the electric piano, I will forget the new melody the next day. I feel that a home is empty without a piano.



[Don's songs 1967](#)



Don's songs 1988

[Linda](#)  
[Flighty Fun](#)