**Essay Title:** *The good old-fashioned music*

*It’s amazing how music has the power to transport us to different places. To this day, when I hear music from the 70s, I think about my childhood and my sisters that passed away. It’s actually a mixture of feelings because the music makes me smile, taking me back to happier times, yet, it makes me sad, because I’m reminded of how different things are today and how 2 of my sisters are no longer with us.*

I loved the **music** we played in our home, back in the seventies. It was always a surprise as to what I would hear, and yet, it wasn’t a surprise based on the number of people and the diversity living under our roof. My oldest sister, Janet would play mostly gospel, and that music always made me feel a sense of inner strength and peace; it made me feel like everything was gonna be alright, no matter what was going on in the world. My sister Cheryl played what seemed to be the weirdest music at the time, but today that music would be classified as alternative (indie) music. Gail played lots of pop music, like the Jackson five and the Osmond Brothers. My brother Les, played a lot of R & B, I played lots of heavy metal and rock music, and of course, the occasional Elton John and Barbara Streisand type of traditional music. Last but not least, there was Brenda, she’d play everything from the Commodores to country music, but Chaka Kahn, was her absolute favorite. Oh, and mom and dad who were madly in love with each other even to this day and just renewed their vows for the 60th anniversary, they constantly played love songs. Their music however, took them to a whole other level, with the touching and kissing, sometimes retiring themselves to their bedroom and we were left to continue listening to their corny love songs and now, the sound of the bed banging back and forth was added as a sound effect; boy was my face red.

I didn’t realize until recently, how powerful the music was in our home but it always made me feel like I was connecting with something greater than myself. I could walk through the door and by the song playing on record player, I knew who was home. Of course, when you live in a home with six children, there is always, someone home. Home, was the best and the safest place in the world back then. It was also the funniest place to be, Everyone wanted to come to our house, all the time because it was filled with so much love and laughter. Sometimes when our music was playing loud in the summer time, it would attract our friends to come knocking on our door. They wanted to come in as if we were having a party. But no, we were actually just doing our housework and chores, but mommy made it fun; we would dance and clean and dance some more, until our work was done. Although we each had our own favorite interest in music, it didn’t matter what was playing, or who was playing it, we still enjoyed it. I loved getting to the record player before everyone else on Saturdays because allowed me to set the tone by playing Elton John while I worked.

Elton John’s, “*Bennie and the Jets*” song, saved my life back in the seventies. My 2nd grade teacher at the end of the year gave me a letter to give my mom and it said she wanted to meet with her. I was so nervous, unsure if I had done something wrong, but when mommy came in to meet with my teacher, she told her that I was gifted and a good candidate for a new “busing program” where Inner city youth were going to be bused to predominantly white, affluent neighborhoods with better schools. The offer was for me to go to a school on 81st street but if I didn’t accept, she would skip me to the 4th grade. As a child, my teachers suggestion did not impress me. I wanted to stay in my neighborhood school with my siblings and the idea of being skipped was totally cool to me. Mom however, wasn’t buying it; she made sure I took advantage of the opportunity. She shipped me off to school on the school bus, to 81st street. I hated it so much the first year and I started playing hooky. Imagine a third grader playing hooky; that would be pretty scary today. I would go across the street to the pizza shop and play Elton John’s, “*Bennie and the Jets*” over and over and over and over, until it was time to go back across the street, get back on the school bus, head home and act like nothing happened. After a while I got tired of the pizza shop, so I would walk over to the Museum of Natural History. There was a donation box that sat by the front door, I would drop some change in the box, literally walk right into the Museum and spend hours there. Why was a child allowed to walk around a great big old museum, alone for hours? I’m still scathing my head over that one but to this day, I have such a connection with that Museum.

The days I would spend at the Museum, I would really miss hearing my Elton John music at the pizza shop, so when I got home, I would get my snack and play my song. It helped me forget for a moment that I would have to start all over again. That song seemed to have the power to wipe away my tears and the pain of being yanked out of the projects, and placed into a setting where I was the only black kid in my class. That song saved my life because for the first year of school, I was an absolutely miserable, unhappy little girl. But after the first year I began to fit right in and started to appreciate the education I was getting. It ended up being one the best things that ever happy to me.

Music has always been a powerful force in my life. Growing up with so many siblings influenced my flexibility and interest in all kinds of music. Each song takes me to a different place, if I allow it to, but seventies music still has the most power over me. Each song has a memory that I am so thankful for, except for the sometimes gross reminders of my parents and the effect of their music. Even today, if I hear Johnny Mathis’s, “*Chances are*”, Nat King Cole’s, “*Unforgettable*” or Ray Charles singing, “*I can’t stop loving you*”, if my parents are in my presence, I get up and leave!