

# **Lessons in Living**

## **Music: "The Song of the Soul"**

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The title of this Lesson in Living was taken from the letterhead of the stationery Milano Music Center used when it first opened in Mesa, AZ, in 1946. I have always had three loves: God, family and Music (If I were to expand this to five loves, I would include friends and country.) How did I prioritize this? I asked myself what I would least want to live without.

Music has always been a big part of my life. I remember my mother softly singing, "Oh How I Miss You Tonight," which was a popular song when my sister, Donna, died at three-years-of age. She adapted words for her little girl and wept quiet tears. I remember my Grandmother Allen singing, "Count Your Many Blessings," when in difficult situations. I remember my Lillywhite uncles playing their horns when they lived with us in Los Angeles. I remember my father whistling at the top of his lungs or playing his harmonica during most of his waking hours. I remember my brother, Lester, playing his clarinet. I remember my youngest brother, George, playing the piano by ear. I remember how I enjoyed pounding away on the big old upright piano Dad bought for us.

When I was fifteen years old, I remember the thrill I felt when I began playing the accordion. I had fallen in love with that happy sound when I first heard it on our radio. I asked Dad if I could have "one of those." He queried, "How much do you think it would cost?" I replied, "About fifteen dollars." He laughingly said, "Add a zero onto that." This stifled any more pleading on my part. And then, guess what? The very next Christmas, I awoke to find a little purple accordion under our Christmas tree! This launched me toward my vocation and husband, Henri Milano, who was a professional accordionist from Salt Lake City, Utah. When our children became five years old, I taught all six of them to play and how we did enjoy making music together! We eventually became the world's largest family of virtuoso accordionists.

Today, music still plays a big part in my family's life, both as a vocation and as a hobby. I can't imagine life without music. Having taught music for sixty years, I can vouch for its ability to bless the lives of others. Whether students plan on music as a vocation, or as an avocation, I have seen it work wonders, bringing pleasure, confidence, relaxation, the joy of making music themselves and the fun of playing in a group. Just as I found satisfaction doing yard work because I could view my efforts afterwards, so also did I find satisfaction listening to my own music.

P. S. Have you noticed how youthful and confident seniors are who play music? If you haven't tried it yet, I can only recommend: try it, you'll like it!