

A line of people gathered outside a quaint music venue one evening this past fall, in bitter Boston weather. We were waiting to see Leo Kottke, a classical guitarist whose music was part of my childhood. When the friendly gentleman at the door took my ticket, he smiled and remarked, "You must be the only person under the age of fifty in this entire line." Looking around, he was right. I was amused by the contrast of age, and I began to ponder why I tend to connect to things of the past. Is it a product of my childhood surroundings, or is there some innate part of me that longs to be nostalgic for times I never knew?

Though I still relate to my peers through current media, my inclination towards bygone eras has formed some of the most meaningful relationships in my life. My great aunt, who shares my love for The Beatles, gives me records from her old collection every time I see her, telling me a new story about each one. She said once that it makes her feel young again. I've spent days in the kitchen with my Nonny as she walks me through the steps to make her famous meatballs and red sauce, reminiscing about doing the same with her mother and her own grandmother when she was a young woman. The connections I feel with my family every time I am able to participate in one of these special interactions have left a profound impact on me - it's funny how things that existed before I was even born have shaped my affinities and my personhood as a whole. Even the owners of a local antique store know to set aside special items for me, telling me personal anecdotes about each one.

As I absorb these different stories, I can see the importance of learning from those who have lived before. I had been shopping at the local antique store a few years ago, looking at the old jewelry as the owner told me stories of how she accumulated the different products that originated from all different time periods and locations. I think of this when I'm wearing the pearl necklace that I bought that day, how seventy years ago a young woman like me had worn it

too, and I wonder how different our lives might have looked. There's a sense of fulfillment that I find in the afternoons spent cutting vegetables and shaping meatballs in the kitchen with my Nonny, when we're talking about Elvis and I'm thinking about how decades ago she was doing the same. Where would I be without my great-aunt who, after expressing her regret about missing an opportunity to see The Beatles in concert, tells me to make the most of each moment? Although I'm older now, I don't just listen to Leo Kottke because my grandfather and my parents play his music; I play it in my car, in my room, or when I sit around a fire with my friends.

The stories that I've heard from so many people have woven their way into my mind and life every day. It's through my love for such stories that I am able to truly understand the significance of connecting to other people from all sorts of backgrounds. I think it's a special thing to hear of so many original experiences, ones that I can remember and share with those in my life. Understanding and relating to the past provides me with inspiration for the future, and allows me to understand the beauty of the human experience in a way I'm incredibly grateful for.