There is a Quaker saying: “Let your life speak.” Describe the environment in which you were raised—your family, home, neighborhood or community—and how it influenced the person you are today.

 I would let my life speak, but I’d rather let it sing. I grew up in a home where harmonies and melodies were as ubiquitous as air. From a young age, I heard the more refined pieces when my mother played piano or when I went to Orchestra Hall to hear the Chicago Symphony Orchestra perform children’s concerts. (A children’s concert is like a regular concert, except a man dresses up as a cat named *Meow*zart.) I watched classic musicals from the couch in my family room. I was also exposed to that which I would label as neither refined nor classic, but which served as the most important musical influence in my life: my dad’s shower concerts. Have you ever heard someone really belt it in the shower? My dad does that, but *louder*. That’s his way of expressing himself. You can feel the passion, how the music makes him feel, from outside the closed door. Hearing my dad sing this way taught me never to feel ridiculous. When I went off to overnight camp for the first time, I brought with me the courage to audition boldly for the camp musicals and to share my passion through performance. I learned to sing often, to proudly express myself through song, because only music has the ability to evoke emotions I didn’t know I had. I learned that if music makes you feel a certain way, then you belt it out, even if it distracts your daughter from her homework.