Musical Memory

Dogs Were Tuned In

BACK IN the 1930s and ’40s, when someone was engaged to tune a piano, they stayed all day and got a good meal as part of the pay.

We had a blind tuner named George, who would tune a few notes, then sit and rest awhile. He liked to feel our heads to see how tall we were, and he could call us by name.

My husband was a piano tuner for more than 50 years, tuning for celebrities like Lily Pons and Tommy Dorsey. In his prime, he tuned six to eight pianos a day. He told of the time he was left alone with two dogs while the customer was out. When he began tuning, the dogs’ howling was so loud that he had to lead them into a bedroom and close the door.

—Josephine Bolerjack, Green Valley, Arizona