Sleepy Sunday

Between Daddy's peaceful violin, a full meal and a summer swelter, kids didn't stand a chance.

My day began shortly after dawn, and I remember looking out the window, surprised that I could still see the face of "the man in the moon" smiling over Tuscumbia, Alabama.

Our family—Mom, Dad, Bob and me—had risen early for church on a Sunday in 1949. My sibling and I remained sleepy and silent at breakfast, but soon we were all dressed in our "Sunday best" and sitting in a neat row on a church pew.

Brother Wendell, our minister, was a portly man with a kind face and a good heart, but he tended to drone on.

After the last song had been sung and the final amen said, welcome release was granted. Before anyone could say, "Hallelujah," I was banded together with other restless children in a fast-paced game of tag.

I'd always come back from church tired and hungry on those long-ago Sundays, my stomach growling with anticipation over the dinner to come. Mom kicked off her shoes and did a sort of wiggly dance as she hurriedly slipped a colorful cotton apron over her dress, tying the thin sashes in a bow behind her back.

Within a few short minutes, my mom, red-faced and bustling about, had the oven going full blast and a pot or pan boiling away on every eye of the stove. It didn't take long for our small, concrete-block house to heat up. Alabama's sweltering, seasonal heat was something we never thought about. It just was.

The preparation of Sunday dinner, like Brother Wendell's sermon,

seemed never-ending until Mother called out, “It’s ready! Everybody wash your hands!”

For sure, the meal was the high point of the day for my brother and me. I say that because after the fried chicken, mashed potatoes, hot biscuits and thick, brown gravy had been eaten and the last dish washed and dried, our mother handed down the dreaded decree for a Sunday nap: “Come on, you two. Let’s go lie down for a while.”

Although I whined most pitiably, my father was unmoved by my tearful protests.

At the sound of his wife’s second summoning for the children, Daddy reached for his violin and shooed me away.

“You can play later,” he said. “It’s nap time. Mind your mother. Go on, Sissy, go on.”

Who Will Win?

Still, it was not until he turned his back to me and began playing his violin that I finally accepted my cause was lost. After I reluctantly crawled up onto the bed, I snuggled close to Mom, feeling her stroke my hair and pat my shoulder.

Although I fought sleep, my eyes grew heavy; my breathing slowed. When my father’s talented fingers met wood, string and bow, the mesmerizing melodies floated from room to room, filling the house with a musically induced calm.

I would be years older before I realized that it was a parental conspiracy from the start; my rebellious resolve and pitiful pleadings never had a prayer.

As I reflect on my childhood, I know that home was a special place where treasured memories were made.

—Kathy W., Greensboro, Georgia