

Perfect Sound Forever

online music magazine presents...

Robert Quine



At home in Akron with mom in 1943

by **Eliza Woodford**

Robbie grew up at 588 Palisades Drive in Akron, Ohio. His grandfather, Cloyd Robert Quine, had founded the Akron Equipment Company, a successful business that made tire molds for Goodyear, Firestone, Goodrich, and Seiberling back when Akron was known as the Rubber Capital of the World, and claimed to have the world's only rubber street. His wife, Rob's grandmother, lived to a very old age. I remember her sitting in a darkish living room putting together huge jigsaw puzzles on a card table.

Robbie's Uncle Van was the famous philosopher, W. V. Quine. His dad, Bob Quine, remained in Akron, working in the family business and eventually taking it over. Rob's mom was Rosalie, née Cohn. It was a second marriage for both Bob and Rosalie. Rob's brother, Van, was enough younger that (at the time) he seemed to be in a completely different orbit. The brothers looked completely different. Robbie had a rather dark complexion, dark wavy hair and big brown eyes. Van was blue-eyed, with milky skin and light brown hair, and he was skinny as a rail.

The Quines lived in a nice Tudor-style house. In it were a grand piano and an old-fashioned kind of organ with two big rectangular pedals that worked its bellows. There were lots of stops on it, too. I don't remember any making much *music* on it, but it was a curiosity and fun to fool around with. Rob's dad was interested in music and had a big record collection. When Meade Lux Lewis or Jimmy Yancey came to Akron, the spark plugs for outings to hear them play at the clubs in Main Street were Bob and Rosalie. So Rob grew up with those influences.

I must have been four or five years old when I remember playing with Robbie, who was a year younger than me. At that time, my family still lived in the city. We liked to play cowboys, and one of us would be Roy Rogers and the other had to be Gene Autrey. Each of us would rather be Roy, the King of the Cowboys. We played the usual way: 'Bang, you're dead.' 'No, you missed me!' After we saw Errol Flynn in Robin Hood, we liked to play that, too, pretending to be Robin Hood meeting Little John on the log and fighting each other with our staffs. When Robbie came over to play, I'd greet him with the words, 'Wanna wrestle?' What could be friendlier?

The Quines had something my family didn't acquire until 1959: a television. In their dark little downstairs den, Robbie spent loads of time watching old westerns, the old black-and-white-ones in which the horses gallop along at breakneck speed in clouds of dust and cowboys look like they're wearing mascara. Robbie knew them all, even the ones that seemed ancient and exotic: Johnny Mack Brown, Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, Will S. Hart, and others. When I went to visit, that was a treat for me, too. Their house was near Highland Square, and the Highland Theater, where Rosalie would drop us off and we could go to a Saturday matinee.

Robbie really liked to come out and visit us in the country, after we moved out of Akron in 1950. We like to do things we thought were adventurous—hike down the gully, try to follow the stream to its source, climb trees, swing on grapevines, dare each other to jump off the roof of the Optimists' pavilion, carve our initials in the big old beech tree. We also had a fine swing suspended from the branch of a white oak. The other reason he liked to come out there, and he told me about it later, was because my mother gave him jobs. She'd send us out to the garden to weed, or have us clear the side lawn of windfall twigs – we'd gather them up and pitch them down the gully. This made him feel useful.

The Quines went on exotic vacations. They'd go to Acapulco, and come back with inlaid wooden pictures and serapes, and Robbie would have drunk lots of Coke because you weren't supposed to drink the water. They also took trips to Europe on the Holland-American Line. Rosalie told the story of being in the Atlantic, en route to London or Paris. Robbie wanted to see the shipboard movie but was told he had to go to bed. Halfway to Europe, Robbie sulked: 'I never get to go anywhere!'

The Quines also went on outings with us and other family friends. At the Carrollton County Fair, our little legs were broiled on the red leather seats of his father's Mercury convertible, blazing hot after hours under the summer sun. Once or twice we went with them to Cook Forest in western Pennsylvania, where we stayed at Macbeth's log cabins along the Clarion River, and for an outing to Put-in-Bay, an island in Lake Erie.

Rosalie was smart, witty, and a big reader. She also had a prodigious memory and was a great raconteur. She was also

friend indeed. Whenever anyone had a problem or got sick, Rosalie was there with the right words and a helping hand. When we were little, if she heard my sister or I were in bed with a sore throat, she'd come over with a coloring book and some crayon or a book of paper dolls. When my father had a heart attack, Rosalie took the rest of in so we wouldn't have so far to travel back and forth from the hospital. I know that Rob had a troubled relationship with her, because he told me so. I can't deny the truth of his own experience, but I could never put it together in any way that made sense with the Rosalie I knew until she died in July 2002.

Rob's father was a gentleman: courtly, always beautifully dressed. I guess he didn't wear a coat and tie all the time, but that's how I remember him. He knew the right way to mix martinis, how long you were supposed to stay at a dinner part (four hours), whom to introduce to whom, and the right way to do everything. He was, though, hard to know. There was something remote about him.

My really close friendship with Robbie was interrupted when my family moved to Tübingen in southern Germany for two years (1954 – 1956). Had I stayed in Ohio, I would have been in 8th and 9th grades those years. Those are years of big growth and change. When I left, Robbie and I were child playmates. When I came back, I felt like we were completely differently people. He was tall and crazy about rock 'n roll and someone named Elvis and I never heard of either.

Robbie must have been a pretty unhappy times as an adolescent. I remember hearing that Bob and Rosalie pulled him out of the public school and sent him to the Western Reserve Academy in Hudson. This was an all-boys' school, and sounded sort of glamorous to me but Robbie, I learned later, had hated it. I went to a dance there once (I think his mom must have cooked it up), and we were both miserably uncomfortable.

After high school, we saw each other only rarely. In 1966, he visited me and my husband in Cambridge. In 1975, he dropped in on us in Montclair, NJ. At some point in the eighties, he played at the Nectarine Ballroom in Ann Arbor, and we went to see him there. I would hear about him from my mother, from his mother. Heard he gotten married. Heard he was touring in Japan. But he didn't go to Akron very often. After his mother died, he and Van sold the house on Palisades. Rob said he and Alice had considered moving there, but decided it didn't really make sense. He definitely felt a sense of loss in knowing he would never again be back in his childhood home.

The last times I spoke to him were after Alice died. He called to tell me how he went out and came back and found her on the bathroom floor. This was a sudden and horrifying loss. He told me the autopsy hadn't revealed any reason for her sudden death. He seemed amazed that he had made her happy. He said he wasn't going 'to do' anything, but in a few months, he just might decide he didn't want to live without her.

See the rest of the [Quine tribute](#)

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