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Topic: Alone or Choices

Alone but not really.

When I was probably 10 years old, one of my favorite things was having the house all to myself, settling into my father's Lazy Boy and watching old black and white movies. TV was a new medium and there were only 3 or 4 channels, none of which were on for any great length of time. I vividly remember the "off-air" Indian Chief image that would come on when the programming ended along with an annoyingly shrill and steady pitch.

Channel 13 was the local Seattle station we were able to get and during the day it ran old movies. The best time was when I was sick and had to stay home from school and was usually totally left to my own devices. I would turn on the TV, climb into the old brown leather chair, pull the foot rest up and settle in for whatever might be airing. I loved the crackling sound tracks, distorted voices, choppy editing, over-the-top acting and storylines and especially the way the actors dressed and moved. The men reminded me of my father; dapper with slicked back hair, usually in suits and ties. We lived out in the country and my father commuted 40 miles to work at Boeing, leaving early in the morning, getting back for dinner, then settling into his chair to read the paper, smoke a cigar and "rest" his eyes. He was NOT sleeping! We all knew differently. Up to a certain age, I got to crawl up onto his lap and snuggle in, checking out how his neck fit so snugly and neatly into the collar of his starched shirt.

Watching the old movies, I wondered what those worlds were, so foreign to me, often packed with tall buildings on busy city streets, big fancy homes or apartments with huge stairways and foyers, with limousines and servants, men in top hats, tails and gloves, and women wearing equally extravagant clothes. They were going out to the latest nightclub or party where the action was or was going to be. Murder mysteries, society stories, Broadway shows, whatever was available to the TV station to air, most likely at minimal cost. The women had elaborate hairdos waved and locked into place and were more often than not flat-chested with draping, silk or satin dresses and wraps embellished with sequins or feathers or fur and sometimes with a headpiece to match, often with long gloves and even longer cigarette holders. Everyone smoked! They sipped champagne and danced strange, slinky waltzes. I asked my mother why the women dressed and moved that way and she called it the "Social Slouch". Flat-chested women were all the rage back then (most of these films were from the 20's and 30's) and women would actually bind their breasts to achieve the look that went with the slouch. They were elegant and exotic and mysterious to me.

I was perfectly happy in those worlds, alone in that big old chair.