

Ed Luinstra: Never Too Late...

My first exposure to Westwinds was at a joint concert that took place at the University of Calgary about 15 years ago. Several bands were performing. We were in the audience because our kid was there playing in the Stampede Show Band. One of the Westwinds bands was playing too, and there were some brochures being distributed asking if I would like to play a musical instrument in a band. I certainly did want to do that, and had always had an interest in music (figured out basic music reading on my own, diddled with keyboards, and had a pretty good recorded music collection) but never knew there was an opportunity like this for adults to learn to play.

It took another year before I went to the orientation meeting at Crescent Heights High School. During that time, I went to another Westwinds concert and listened to the bands. I decided I wanted to join the Red Band.

Finally, in September 1994, I went to the orientation meeting and found out how things worked. You had to join Green Band to learn to play. That was fine; that was exciting. Mike Sakatch was the Green Band director, and he had a meeting with all us prospective members. He asked me what instrument I would like to play. I said, "I don't know; maybe something in the low brass." Mike replied, "Fine, you'll play trombone!" That turned out to be a great decision, and I'm still playing trombone today (later he asked the same question of a spindly little girl. She said she might want to play the tuba. Mike didn't bat an eyelash and agreed).

That Green Band was big! We had 53 members. About 1/3 were flutes! I didn't see anything wrong with that. I was just a beginner.

Once into the system, I found it very challenging but exciting to learn to play. I went from Green to Blue to Red to Gold in four years. That was quite a stretch but I did it... and having arrived there, observed that there were only another one or two of the original 53 Greenies there. Some of the others were playing successfully in the jazz bands, though.

Westwinds has been a terrific experience for me. Besides learning a lot about music and the basics of trombone playing, it has been great working as part of a musical team. The social side of playing in a band is very important too. I have met some fascinating people and made many close friends. If I had to do it over again, I would do it the same way - only I would start earlier!