

Pierre Gosselin: Still Singing

I don't recall exactly how and where I heard about Westwinds, but once I attended a rehearsal in 1991, I was hooked. Now, I cannot see myself not attending rehearsals each and every year. The members of each group I have met through the years have all brought a willingness to share their talents and a desire to do their very best.

I have always enjoyed music and sang in high school choirs and musicals, but never picked up an instrument. Here was my chance to learn! I rented a clarinet to begin my Westwinds musical adventure. I clearly remember my first concert ever at Christmas in the Jack Singer with the Green Band. Thanks to director Mike Sakatch for a truly memorable first year.

The second year I was lucky enough to purchase a used sax from a member who had upgraded to a newer model. So now I alternated between the clarinet and the sax under the direction and motivation of Rod Pauls and Jim Finkbeiner. At some point I even tried percussion. I thoroughly enjoyed the second year and the challenges of working through some great music. Somewhere along the way rumours began circulating the organization was contemplating a choir program. I was close to being the first one in line to sign up for the choir. I am probably the only remaining member of the original Westwinds Green Choir still singing in the Choral Ensemble. I am both proud and humbled at the opportunity to represent Westwinds at each and every performance because I truly love to sing.

When the choir first began in 1994, our director was Kevin Willms. What a great time we had! One of our first pieces, *Dona Nobis Pacem* (Latin for "Give us peace"), was performed earlier this year by our Green Choir. How appropriate that this should happen in the 20th Anniversary year.

After a year of attending both the choir and band rehearsals, I had to give one up, and this was not an easy decision. I was learning so much from both programs, but in the end my heart won out and I left the band to concentrate on choir. Soon there were two choirs with the addition of the Mixed Choir, since Green Choir members needed somewhere to grow and develop. Here, through

the years, I began to volunteer as group librarian, group manager and even took on the role of newsletter editor for a year. Westwinds was giving me so much, and I wanted to give back in some small way.

Within a couple of years the decision was made to hold a choral retreat to Banff. What a terrific experience! A whole weekend of concentrated choral music.

In early 2001, I began to experience some health problems and had to leave Westwinds for a year. When I heard there was now a Choral Ensemble, I just had to go for a peek! In no time I was back in the saddle, and I have not looked back since. Director Mike Gardner continues to find challenging music for us to stretch our abilities and brings out the best from all of us.

To me, Westwinds is all about, teamwork, learning, celebrating music and most of all the joy and challenge of performing. I look forward to every Thursday night rehearsal. I would be remiss if I did not mention the accompanists who have been there through the years to support and encourage the choirs: Marie Lewin was the first accompanist, followed by Bev Monro and Susan Pagenkopf. Without accompanists to help “pound the notes” for us, we would not sound anywhere as good as we strive to be. They have and continue to help us all achieve and grow. I thank them so very much from the bottom of my heart for their continued support; they truly are 'unsung heroes'.