

## **Susan (Craig) Miller: It's All About the Music**

When I was contacted by the 20th Anniversary Committee and invited to share my memories, I agreed to do so with pleasure.

I was part of the first choir in 1993 and by the following year, became part of the Executive. My first year on the executive was PR and Advertising. I then took on the role of Vice President, followed by President for a year and a half. When I got married, I moved to my new husband's home in Ontario in 1997. By August 1998, we were living in Auckland, New Zealand and then moved to Wales (UK) in September 1999 where we still live today with our three children. Boy, have times changed since I was single and working too hard in Calgary!

I work only part-time now (if you don't count being a mom!) but am still involved with charities and non-profit groups. I am a trustee for a music charity here in Wales that offers one-to-one tuition to children and adults on musical instruments, singing and musical theatre. In many ways it is similar to Westwinds; I find I am bringing my experience with Westwinds to this group (you can look at our website: [www.northwalesmusic tuition.co.uk](http://www.northwalesmusic tuition.co.uk) ) One of the most comparable aspects is the ethos of being "all about the music". Two of my children at age nine and seven are learning instruments with this group.

Westwinds was such a huge part of my life during those years in the '90s. I believed so much in the concept, and we all worked so hard to try and meet everyone's needs. It was very difficult for a group of volunteers with jobs and families to manage all that needed to be done and not drown. For example, in 1994, Westwinds was five groups. By 1997, it was eleven, with potential to get even bigger. It was clear we had outgrown our organizational structure.

In true Westwinds fashion – as a proactive organization – we held a Policy Forum with input from the Executive, Directors and Members. I was proud to be a part of that visionary weekend, and I believe many of the policies that resulted from that Forum are still in place today.

Another standout for me was our two years with *Mozart on the Mountain*. I am proud of helping organize our performances and recruitment drives there. What

a coup to be playing with the CPO! Whether we played on the stage, sat in the audience or handed out leaflets at the booth, it was an exciting time to be a member of Westwinds!

I could write pages and pages of my experiences and memories from those four years as a member! In addition to the highlights I've just mentioned, there were two other important aspects that I would like to share.

Firstly, was the singing. I love to sing, and the Westwinds Choir was just what I needed in my life. Secondly were the people. I made some fine friendships, some of which have lasted despite my multi-country moves (thanks to email)! Others made a deep impression on me at the time for a variety of reasons; people I'll always remember with respect and thanks for the positive influence they had on my life. These include Peter Paulson, Dennis Orr, Kevin Willms, Dave Hiley, Shirley Evans, Geri Moon, Colleen Crowweller and Cathie Snelgrove. Cheers, guys!

In closing, let me congratulate you on 20 years of "proactive vision". You continue to grow and adapt to the needs of your groups, and I'm sure it isn't always easy! There are always new challenges to face, but Westwinds is such a fantastic, groundbreaking and successful concept that it is worth all the "blood, sweat and tears". Think of how many people over the last 20 years have been able to play music, learn an instrument and use their voices – all because of Westwinds.

Remember: it's "all about the music". Everything else is just details.

With best wishes and fond memories,

Sue (Craig) Miller