

Colleen Crossweller: Part of a Vision

Colleen Crossweller is one of the original members of Westwinds. Previously living in Edmonton, Colleen had played with a beginner band there and missed it when she moved to Calgary. She heard that Peter Paulson (another of the founders) was thinking of starting an adult community band in Calgary. “I knew it was coming and was watching for it,” remembers Colleen. She and her sister joined together and enjoyed spending time together at weekly rehearsals.

In the Edmonton band, she had played flute, but the Westwinds’ directors wanted a true beginner band. One of the stipulations in that first band was that even if participants already played an instrument, they were asked to learn a different instrument. She took up the euphonium at the suggestion of the director (and one of the founders), Dennis Orr, who recommended it as a good choice for Colleen as she had just had braces put on; however, Colleen suspects he suggested the euphonium because bands are always short on low brass!

“Music has always been a part of my life,” recalls Colleen. As a child, she played piano and sang in choirs; notably, she was in a singing group under the direction of her “wonderful music teacher” Lloyd Erickson. This group, forerunners of the Young Canadians, participated in the Calgary Stampede Grandstand Show. More importantly, Colleen met her husband through that group.

Colleen had always wanted to play in a jazz band, but remembers “...whining about how euphonium wasn’t a part of the jazz band make-up.” Mike Sakatch (a Westwinds director) lent her a valve trombone to try out. “I really loved it, and haven’t looked back!”

Colleen contributed so much to the success of the early days of Westwinds. She served as Secretary of the organization – pre-computers – and worked on committees and workshops. She truly believes in the mandate of Westwinds, learning and growing musically, as well as volunteering time to make the organization thrive.

Colleen credits Westwinds for encouraging her to learn something new.

“Thanks to Peter and Ildi [Paulson], Dennis Orr and Rod Pauls for having a vision and allowing me to be a part of it.”