
Mary and Lawrence Williams
-by Renee Hester

As I entered Eagle Bay Church foyer last Sunday morning, I heard an old and familiar Christmas song, "Star of the East". It was one of my mother's favourites and one not often heard today. It was Mary and Lawrence Williams readying a gift of song for the Sunday service.

Mary and Lawrence have been married for fifty-one years and music has always been an important part of their lives, before and after they were married. The Williams will tell you they were born at the right time. The desire to sing was always there and the opportunity to perform was a given for their generation.

For Lawrence, this is his 67th year of music. He was five years old when he sang with his father and five brothers at a concert in Foxwarren, Manitoba. The year was 1932. He never looked back. Times were tough but the pleasure of music was always there.

Mary grew up in Reston, Manitoba. Like Lawrence, Mary always had music as a major part of her life. She learned to play the piano and had vocal training as well. Mary was a member of a senior choir by age fourteen. Happiness was a song.

The Williams speak affectionately of the opportunities to perform that were offered to them as young people. There were musical festivals, Major Bowes Talent Nights, school choirs, church choirs, live radio broadcasts and talent nights sponsored by A.C.T. (Associated Canadian Travelers). They participated before and after they were married. The war also offered opportunities to singers. There was a need for entertainers to perform for the troops and suddenly money was available to stage such shows. Boosting morale was a major part of the war effort.

Mary and Lawrence spent a number of years in the Prairie Provinces raising their family. In 1969, they moved to Salmon Arm where they operated "Ell-Dee's Drive in Restaurant" on the Trans-Canada Highway east of Salmon Arm. The drive-in closed only two days a year. Their teen-age customers of '69 to '74 still call them "Mom and Pop".

In those days, there was little time for singing. As well as running the café, the Williams had an orchard, a tent-trailer rental business and catered to buses coming to Shuswap Lake Estates. Lawrence ran a café in Blind Bay. Music was a distant fifty on their list of priorities. After four and one half year, they were very, very, very tired and got out of the restaurant business more than ready to tackle other pursuits.

In spite of their busy life at the drive-in, Mary could not bear to be away from her beloved music. She joined the Shuswap Singers and is still a member after twenty-seven years. Lawrence joined the group later and is a twenty-three year veteran. Both singers enjoy the challenge Shuswap Singers offers. They have seldom missed a season. Their pleasure is passed on to those who attend these concerts.





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Mary and Lawrence belong to the Sorrento Glee Club. For many years, Mary chose the music for Eagle Bay Community Church. In fact, the Williams have brought music to this wee church since the late 1970s when Frank Adley invited them to attend a service after hearing them sing at a service in Sorrento.

Both singers enjoy singing as a part of a choir or as a soloist. Singing harmony to Mary's soprano is probably Lawrence's greatest joy. They have always been able to do this because of similar backgrounds.

In case people believe them to be one dimensional, Mary wanted me to know they have other interests; cross-country skiing being one of them. She admits to being nervous the first time she encountered a tiny decline but she has overcome this. The Williams travel frequently and far. Lawrence golfs and both square dance.

When the Williams decided to leave the prairies and become part of the Shuswap family, the area was enriched. They have brought pleasure to everyone who listens to their sweet music. They have shared their talents willingly and graciously. As a community, we offer a huge thank-you. God Bless!