

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” — *John Quincy Adams*

Robert’s Farewell

What words come to mind when you think of Robert? Well leadership, commitment, responsibility, organized, planner, partner, musician, cook, host, caring, giving, appreciative, and I’m sure many more. But most of us met him through his gift of music and choral production. The rest came with the package.

Robert believes in sharing his gift of joy through music with the community and the community showed its appreciation when the West Ottawa Board of Trade awarded him the People’s Choice Business Award in 2015. He was also nominated for Citizen of the Year in 2016. In addition, many compliments have been received from audiences and the music community over the years.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” Robert certainly does that. Where Robert goes, there will be music. He came to Ottawa in 2009 and soon thereafter founded the Goulbourn Male Chorus. The chorus grew and their performance schedule increased. Then, in order to augment one of their performances in 2011, Robert recruited some ladies to perform what was intended to be a one-time gig. However, due to strong interest, the West Ottawa Ladies Chorus was founded in 2012 with 12 ladies and continued to grow to its current membership of 40.

Joe Namath said “To be a *leader*, you have to make people want to follow you.” For the West Ottawa Ladies Chorus, Robert focused on the balance and integrity of the chorus as a whole; he asked for and received a commitment from all members, some of whom drive quite some distance to attend practices twice a week; he set high standards and the ladies rose to the challenge; he inspired and he taught; he chose a lovely variety of music enjoyed by chorus members and audiences alike; indeed, he led the chorus to excellence. The ladies keep coming back for more and life-long friendships have been forged. He has led where others want to follow. And he not only appreciates the efforts of the chorus members but he also recognizes and appreciates all those who help make the chorus successful . . . Peter our accompanist of course! (where would we be without him?!), our audiences, the ticket seller, the media, the historian, those who place the risers, photographers and videographers and all those in between.

But Robert is a prairie boy and the west is calling. He says he is retiring along with Brian, but that remains to be seen. For sure, they are retiring from Ottawa endeavours; for sure they are heading for the Island; But I am thinking Robert will have to sit on his hands, for with his energy, he may not be able resist finding another niche in which to share his joy of music.

We will miss you Robert, and we will miss Brian and his goodies. However, we wish you both well on the next chapter of your journey. Enjoy! And Thank you for the Music!

Tribute written by former chorus member Shelley McLeod - July 2020