

# THE ST. AUGUSTINE'S PARISHIONER

St. Augustine's Catholic Community

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## Music for the Masses

If you ask Peter Allen about his life and career, it doesn't take long before he mentions his father, John Allen. John was a good father to be sure, but the arc of his musical career inspired Peter to follow closely in his father's footsteps.

John was born in London in 1915, and his family moved to Vancouver while John was still a boy. By all accounts, he was a child prodigy, playing first clarinet in the Kitsilano Boys' Band at the age of 12. At 17 he was playing in the Vancouver symphony. By this

time John's talents were getting national recognition, and soon the RCMP came looking to recruit him as concert master for the RCMP Band. Realizing the magnitude of the opportunity, John accepted the job, packed his bags and moved to Ottawa.

It was there that John met a young stenographer who worked on Parliament Hill for one of the cabinet ministers. Friends had set them up on a date, and although things didn't click immediately, John was persistent, and John and Catharine were married within a few

years. It wasn't long before Peter and his sister Carol rounded out the small family.

Peter took to music from a very young age. His father played classical music at home almost exclusively, so Peter was weaned on the likes of Mozart, Bach and Tchaikovsky. Making use of the family piano he found a drive within himself to become a real player, like his father.

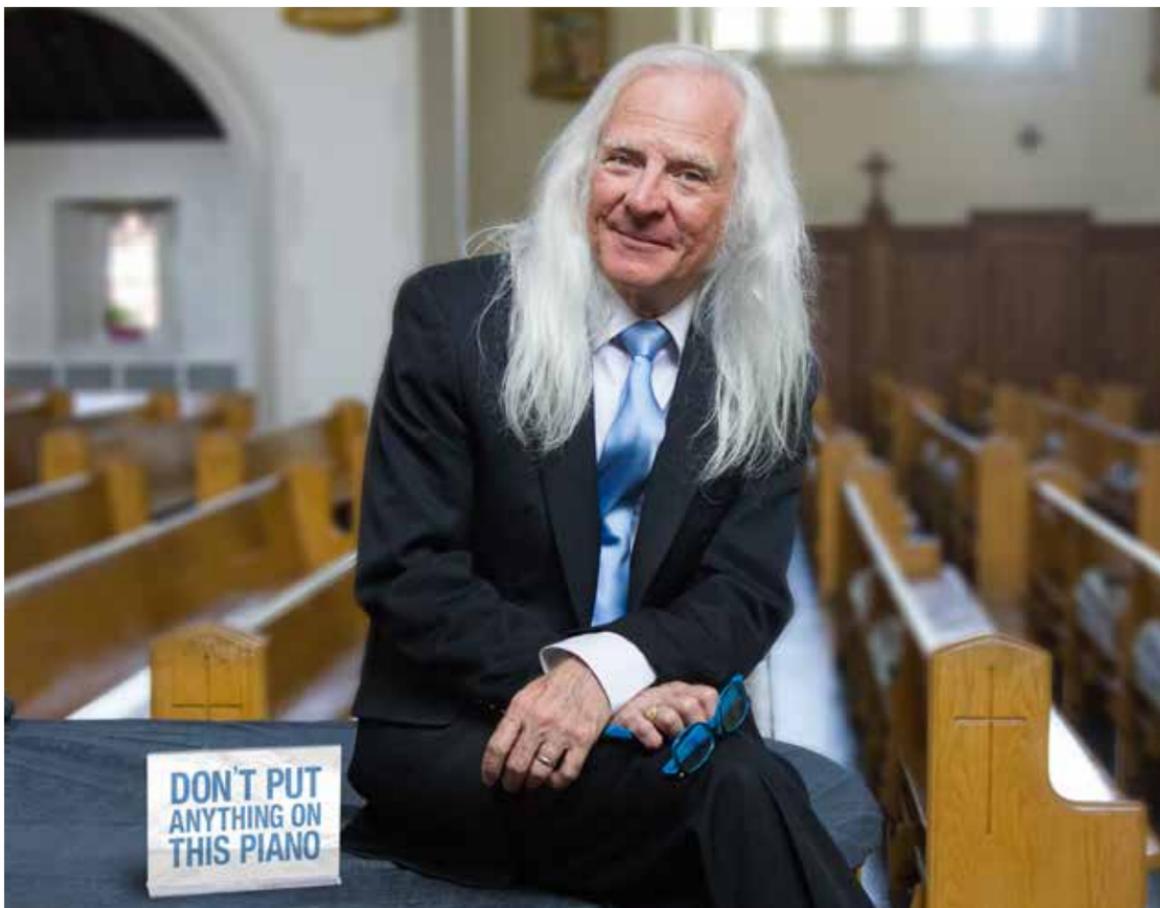
When Peter was 6, his father was transferred to Winnipeg by the RCMP. It was there that Peter got his first real piano lessons, from the nuns in the order of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, at St. Mary's Academy. While he was learning to read music from the sisters and his father, Peter taught himself about harmony and music history.

At 14, he got his first professional gig, playing big band music in legions and clubs. Here he was noticed by the Winnipeg German Club, who recruited him to play every week. The band uniform included lederhosen, which Peter happily wore.

He was still young enough to be in high school. But things didn't go as well there as on the stage. It was a rough school and Peter dealt with bullies on a daily basis. As a result, he didn't finish high school, and didn't graduate. He got a job as an apprentice blacksmith to earn money, and continued to study music and music theory on his own.

Wanting to further his education musically speaking, Peter decided to take the Toronto Conservatory theory and history exams, and passed. His next step was to apply at the University of Manitoba, where there was a nationally renowned music program. But now the fact that he never finished high school became a problem. Acceptance into U of M would be near impossible without it. However, the dean gave Peter a chance to perform in front of a panel of professors, where he

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## Dennis Bruchet

If you've been to mass at St. Augustine's Parish, then you've met Dennis. Perhaps not a shake-his-hand, "nice to see you" kind of meeting, but certainly, you would be among the majority of parishioners who have seen his friendly face. As an usher at our church in three stints, starting back in 1949, he's brought countless people to their seats, reached into pews with a collection basket thousands of times, and generally been a smartly dressed, welcoming figure on Sunday morning for decades.

Dennis was born and grew up in Lethbridge Alberta. His parents were very active in St. Patrick Oblate parish, so Dennis was taught at a young age the importance of spirituality, and of contribution and sacrifice. This also applied to his eight brothers and three sisters. The Catholic faith was important in Dennis' family, and so it just made sense that, as a young lad he would be an altar boy.

In grade 8, Dennis met a young girl who had immigrated to Canada from Hungary. Helen had his attention from the start, and by the time he was in grade 10, the two were dating.

Around the same time Dennis' father was considering retirement, and to him, Vancouver seemed like a good place to do that, and before long the family had put down roots here. Dennis even attended one year at St. Augustine School and finished high school at Vancouver College in 1947.

Back in 1940 the Crusader's Club was a group whose main task was to assist the Oblates in running the parish and look after the ushering. In 1949 they noticed the smartly dressed and always on time Dennis and asked him to join.

Helen came to Vancouver in 1947 and attended St. Paul's School of Nursing and graduated in September 1950.

By now it was clear to Dennis and Helen that they wanted to be husband and wife. In October 1950 they returned to Lethbridge to be married at St. Patrick Church by Father

Wilfred Malloy O.M.I. and Dennis started a career with Safeway as a warehouse order clerk and worked his way up to city salesman and eventually a buyer.



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## Music for the Masses

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performed a piano piece by Mozart, and an original composition. His performance impressed the panel so much they admitted him to the program, on the condition that he complete his degree, which he did.

Throughout this time Peter was playing in restaurants and cocktail lounges to make money. He taught himself jazz and began playing at weddings and private functions.

Around that time, Peter's parents made the decision to move to Vancouver, but Peter was in the throes of his studies, so he remained behind in Winnipeg.

By 1969, he had begun playing at St. Ignatius in Winnipeg. It quickly became the most successful youth mass in Canada, with 900 attending the services every Sunday night.

In 1977 Peter attended McGill University for graduate studies in music composition. Upon his return to Winnipeg, Peter played throughout Canada and the northern U.S., touring with rock bands and various other artists until he was hired as the staff writer at Century 21 Music Studios, where he remained until 1986.

Peter was also hired as the organist at St. Mary's Cathedral in Winnipeg. He was appointed music director for Pope John Paul II's visit in 1984. Peter wrote new mass parts for the occasion, which we still sing at St. Augustine's today. During the same time period, Peter, along with three other composers, created a concert series of contemporary concert music called IZ Music, which held regular concerts at the Winnipeg Art Gallery Auditorium. All were recorded and broadcast by the CBC.

In 1986, Peter responded to an ad he saw for a film scoring class at USC in California. Instructors included the likes of Henry Mancini, Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams, all renowned composers in Hollywood. He was accepted, and even won a competition there, in which the prize was a 7 week tutoring from Earle Haggen, famous for composing the theme for "The Andy Griffiths Show". Once again to make ends meet, Peter played in the Beverly Hills Catholic Church. He played at the funerals of Rita Hayworth and Ray Bolger.

Then in 1988, Peter's mother passed away. He immediately relocated to Vancouver to look after his father, who by this time had severe Alzheimer's. Peter cared for his father for the next 10 years until his death.

Now in Vancouver, Peter began getting work in music composition for television and commercials. He got his first film scoring job for the Angelina Jolie film "Cyborg II". That began a prolific career in film scoring. To date, Peter has composed music for more than 140 films and television shows for Hollywood studios such as Fox, Paramount, Sony, Universal, etc, as well as Canadian film companies. He's been nominated for several Leo, Gemini and Socan awards, and won twice.

In 1990, Peter attended mass at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Coquitlam, where Father Craig Scott was delivering compelling sermons to a small congregation. Peter played some of the music he had performed at St. Ignatius for Father Scott. The priest quickly agreed to let Peter recruit some of his former band mates to provide music at the Saturday Evening Mass. The repertoire was contemporary and pop, and within 2 years, the attendance had grown to more than 600, mostly young people.



Peter and his Harley Davidson

In 1991, Peter was introduced to St. Augustine's Parish, where he was asked to play at a wedding. Father Mohan, the pastor at the time, recognized Peter's talent and hired him immediately as St. Augustine's music director.

In 1999, a young woman named Nathalie Desrochers joined the choir at St. Augustine's, and a year later, on Easter Sunday, Peter asked for her hand in marriage.

If you ask Peter today why he has worked so hard all these years to bring compelling music to the masses at St. Augustine's, he'll tell you it's an opportunity to play a wonderful pipe organ, to work with the people and musicians in the choir, and to be part of an amazing community. Peter believes that music is an integral part of liturgy, and as music director, his job is to produce music that works with and connects us to the liturgy and the gospel message.

We have many things to be thankful for at St. Augustine's Parish. Peter Allen is one of them.

## Dennis Bruchet

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In 1964 Dennis was transferred to Vancouver where he became the grocery merchandising manager at their division office.

And so it was that in 1970, Dennis and Helen came to St. Augustine's Parish. Thanks to the respect he had earned in his previous and ongoing involvement with St. Augustine's he was asked to take charge of the ushers' and enhance their role in the church. With Dennis at the helm from 1974 through 1986, the group achieved some 75 members.

Dennis also served on the Parish Council in the mid 1970's when they started having bingo in the school one night a week as a fund raiser which ran until the 1990's.

By this time Dennis and Helen were raising their family of nine children, seven boys and two girls. With the responsibility of fatherhood and a busy work life Dennis handed the reins of the Ushers ministry back in 1986.

For the next 18 years he was a busy father and executive eventually retiring three years early in 1990 after a career of 37 years.

Around the mid 1990's, then Pastor Father Rossiter was asked to preside over the funeral of Bishop O'Grady O.M.I. to be held at St. Augustine's. He tapped Dennis to once again manage the ushering at the church. Dennis' long standing desire to contribute to his parish and his community kicked in and he agreed.

As requested by Father Brioux, Dennis became involved in the ushering as an assistant to lead usher John Roberts from 1996 to 2013. During

this time they brought in eight female ushers and instituted a dress code.

Dennis began helping with the maintenance at the church including adding rubber stoppers to the pews to stop the kneelers from banging, and painting the foyer. Dennis headed a crew of parishioners including Chris Milbers, Stirling Colwill, John Zadra and Luigi Antonioni.

We have Dennis to thank for our church's nativity scene displayed on the lawn every Christmas. Years ago Dennis saw an ad about a company who made a do-it-yourself nativity kit. Always the handyman, Dennis bought one and it became the family's until 2005 when he gave it to the Parish. Several parishioners assisted Dennis in putting the nativity scene up from 2005-2016, including John Roberts, Sterling Colwill, Roy Pimental, Terry Murphy and Tom Gazdaj.

Sadly, Dennis lost his wife Helen in 2005 after 54 years of marriage. But today at age 91, he's a grateful man. He prays every day and thanks God for the many blessings he's been given, with Helen topping the list. He's thankful too, for his community family at St. Augustine's.

Dennis lives in a retirement home and enjoys all the amenities and activities offered including use of a gym to stay fit.

Their children, sadly two sons are now deceased, blessed Dennis and Helen with 22 Grandchildren and 9 Great Grandchildren. Five of them were married at St. Augustine's.

In 2007 Dennis met a special lady and companion, Myrna and together they enjoy a happy social life, travelling and participating in many special family celebrations.

The Bruchet family

