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Commemorating Collins: Peter's gifts live on for students

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Photograph By KAMLOOPS THIS WEEK

Doug Collins remembers his son coming home and announcing he was going to give his guitar away.

"That was just Pete," Doug said of his late son, a music teacher and singer. Peter had a student with a lot of talent, great potential but family resources didn't allow for a decent musical instrument.

"So Pete would work to get it all ready and he'd give it to him," Doug said -- a man who always put his students first.

It's why Doug, his wife Sue and their daughter-in-law Rochelle know the man they love would approve of their plans to create a memorial fund in his name to provide bursaries to help students like the one who received the guitar, young budding musicians with commitment who just need a little help.

The fund has grown through donations made after Peter died on May 3 last year, the result first of an autoimmune disease and, later, cancer. Doug and Peter also worked at the Broadcast Centre and, through owner Pattison Broadcast Group, additional money was put into the fund that supports developing musicians.

Both men were also members of the Freemasons of B.C. and Yukon.

Doug, its Grand Master, presented the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra's general manager with a cheque for \$10,000.

Doug said Peter followed the freemason ideals, "helping family, helping community, helping others."

The bursary will be run through the KSO and provide young students access to its music school, where Peter taught for years.

Perhaps fittingly, as the press conference proceeded talking about Peter's love of music and how he found a second home with the KSO school, music could be heard coming from one of the classrooms as the orchestra's principal violinist, Cvetozar Vutev, conducted a class.

The fund will be boosted by a matching grant from the Department of Canadian Heritage Endowment Incentives Program.

Doug expects additional donations and grants should grow it to about \$50,000 by next year.

The fund will be open to all School District 73 students as well as those attending the KSO school who are under the age of 18 when they apply.

Applications will only be accepted for lessons now offered at the school. Existing students must have their accounts current when they apply.

Finally, all relevant documentation -- an application form that asks about music studies, names of teachers, what instruments, family income and, again perhaps in a nod to Peter as much as to the school, a brief explanation of how they have benefited from lessons and what music means to them.

For Peter, music was more than just his tenor voice, Doug said at the time of his son's death.

"His real contribution was the way he reached out to people and talked to people.

"He just had a gift for being able to reach out."

At the press conference, Rochelle reiterated that view, talking about a husband who "had a talent for finding the little successes in his students. He loved seeing them at the Festival of the Performing Arts and he loved when they would sing in the mass choir at Carnegie Hall."

But, she said, he was also a man who would drive a student home if he needed a ride, who was as much a friend as he was a mentor and teacher.

The first bursaries are expected to be awarded at the beginning of the upcoming school year. Applications are available online at kamloopssymphonymusicschool.com and must be submitted by Aug. 31.

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