



# AURORA UNIVERSITY

MAGAZINE ————— VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2 — FALL 2016



**REMEMBERING  
ROGER PAROLINI**

# Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine\*

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long;  
this is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.*

*Perfect submission, perfect delight!  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;  
Angels descending bring from above  
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long;  
this is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.*

*Perfect submission — all is at rest,  
I in my Savior am happy and blest;  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long;  
this is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.*

\*Written in 1873, this hymn was an all-time favorite for Roger, who included it in countless performances.



*Rebecca L. Sherrick*  
**REBECCA L. SHERRICK**  
**PRESIDENT**

In this edition of the Aurora University magazine we celebrate the life and legacy of Roger Parolini. Roger welcomed me to AU with good humor and encouragement. He introduced me to the Advent Christian denomination and explained the richness of the church’s camp tradition. He taught me all of the versions of the *alma mater* and reminded me that singing sharp is no greater virtue than singing flat. We spoke about reviving the fine arts at Aurora University and compared notes about stewardship of the library’s special collections.

Over time, we even developed our own series of standing jokes, something that Roger did often to create a special bond with a colleague, alum or friend. One of his favorites was my friend and assistant Maggie Sharrer. Each summer, when Marilyn and Roger headed to Camp Bethel, I waited for what was sure to follow. Soon a box would arrive. And inside? A disreputable looking (and smelling) used lobster bib, adorned with splattered butter and accompanied by empty shells ... and a handwritten note from Roger extolling the merits of his lobster dinner.

Each of us — and all of us — have special memories of Roger. He relished a good dinner or a perfect piece of pie and memorialized them in his magazine columns.

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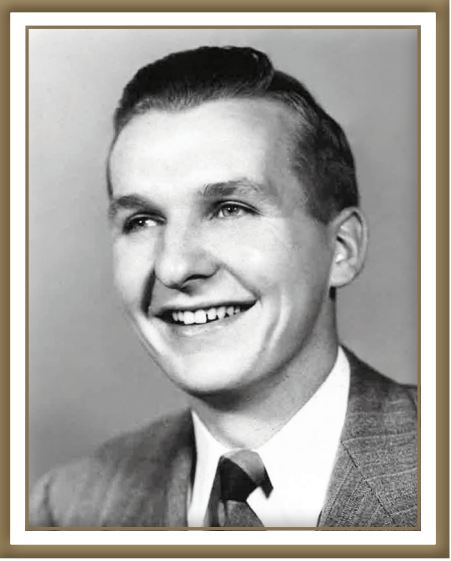




# Eulogy

By Dr. Rebecca Sherrick, President

**Roger K. Parolini** was an Aurora University institution, serving students, faculty and staff in a variety of capacities for more than six decades. He passed away June 9, 2016, at age 90. Shortly thereafter, friends and family gathered on campus for a memorial service in his honor, celebrating his love for family, the university, community and church. The pages that follow serve as a tribute to a wonderful man who changed the lives of many.



I am honored to represent the Aurora University community as we celebrate the life of Roger Parolini and extend our sympathy to Marilyn and her family. As I reflect upon Roger’s legacy, I realized that we simply cannot tell all of our favorite Parolini stories in these few days. They will continue to be shared online, in conversations and at Homecoming.

I want to thank the many members of the Aurora University community who came together in recent days to honor Roger. Two special members of the advancement staff stood often at Roger’s side over the past decade. Paul Dude shared an office with Roger, not because the university was short on space, but because it was his personal ministry to watch over his friend. Thank you, Paul. And Teri Tomaszewicz, the university’s vice president for development, loved Roger and Marilyn from the moment she met them. Like so many within the AU family, Teri, I am grateful for the heartfelt gifts that you shared with Roger and will continue to share with Marilyn and the Parolini family.

For seven decades, Aurora College occupied a place in Roger’s heart. His life was a testimony to the power of liberal learning. Character and Scholarship. How many times did we hear Roger talk about the impact that Aurora College had on a young man who grew up in the midst of the Great Depression on a New England farm? We need look no further than the long and impressive list of job titles Roger accumulated to understand

the extraordinary breadth and depth of his mind, heart and soul. How shall we remember him in behalf of the university family?

Roger was a **keeper of memories**. Like the elephants he seemed to admire, Roger never forgot. He recalled birthdays — often reaching out to sing over the phone — and penned innumerable notes. His was the institutional memory — vibrant, vital and often shared.

Roger both narrated the college and university story and worked diligently to connect one generation to the next. In 1987, the staff of the yearbook recognized Roger as a **“builder of bridges,”** whose life and career are dedicated to bringing people and groups together in a significant way.

Roger did more than build bridges, however. He also worked to maintain them in times good and times complicated. The Alumni Association celebrated Roger’s role in the perpetuation of all things Spartan with the 1985 presentation of the first Spirit Award. Long before a bronze Spartan statue guarded the AU Quadrangle, there was Roger — poised to champion those values, traditions and ideals that mattered most.

The citation read when the Spirit Award was bestowed described Roger as a **“poet without parallel** in all of literature.” So awesome were

Roger’s literary skills that others sometimes resorted to verse to celebrate the Spartan Bard. One of my favorite alums contributed to a 1990 celebration of Roger with a work she titled “Parolini’s Personal Poem, dutifully and lovingly written by Fran Berg.”

When we gathered to dine on favorite Aurora College recipes during the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the college’s move from Mendota to Aurora, I attempted something similar. After laboring for days on a dedicatory rhyme for the Parolinis, I looked Roger straight in the eye and recited ... only to have him turn to Marilyn at the end of the presentation to inquire ... what was she talking about?

Roger was a preeminent **good sport**, who graciously absorbed the efforts of others to be funny. In 1990, the university community feted him with an evening of memories and memorials titled “Music, Miles, Meals and Money.” The occasion was complete with a Latin subtitle that translated read “I came, I sang, I ate.”

Of course, Roger’s appreciation for the culinary arts — especially those perfected by Marilyn — is legendary. He was a **world-class eater, a compiler of cookbooks, a great fan of cherry pie and an unabashed and not terribly subtle dropper of hints**. In a column written for the university magazine in 2001, Roger acknowledged the vulnerabilities of memory loss and then turned to several of his favorite subjects ... key signatures, hymns and good food. He recalled in vivid detail a number of fine meals and shared news of an important new scientific theory. Roger, you see, had discovered a direct link from his stomach to the memory part of his brain. He then proposed that friends serve distinctive dishes when he visited — rack of lamb or cheese grits or bouillabaisse. Such offerings, he promised, would help him remember and would perhaps even lead to recognition in subsequent alumni magazine columns.

Roger was, of course, **an accomplished singer, a revered conductor, a master musician**. His letters, essays and columns were those of a **well-educated man, who loved learning in all of its forms**. Roger could honor Theo Sinden with discourse on Chaucer, sing the first bars of an aria from “Pagliacci” to Marilyn

at LaScala or pen a compelling travel narrative with ease. He was an **educator** to the very depth of his soul, a teacher who gave freely of himself and his talents.

And always, always Roger served his college and university with an open and willing heart. When asked to resume his work as choir director in the mid-1980s, Roger seemed to hesitate. But soon rehearsals started. Chapel appearances and a Christmas concert followed in quick succession. And then it was time for the Choir Tour. Once again, Roger took to the road with a busload of students. Not much had changed, he reflected later. Students still ate “anything and everything in sight” and lost clothes, textbooks, eye glasses and music with great frequency.

The mid-80s choir tried Roger’s patience, even as they fulfilled his larger expectations. Before each concert, the group would gather for prayer and devotions. One particular reading shared by a student stayed with Roger and was quoted in one of his columns.

*Packing up the dreams God planted  
In the fertile soil of you;  
Can’t believe the hopes He’s granted  
Means a chapter in your life is through;  
But we’ll keep you close as always;  
It won’t even seem you’ve gone,  
’Cause our hearts in big and small ways  
Will keep the love that keeps us strong.*

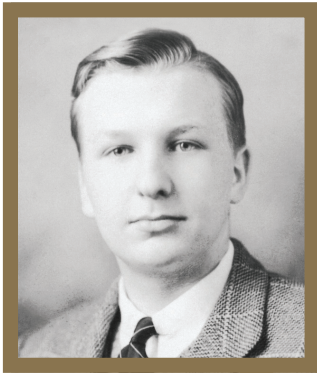
*And friends are friends forever  
If the Lord’s the Lord of them.  
And a friend will not say “never”  
’Cause the welcome will not end.  
Though it’s hard to let you go,  
In the Father’s hand we know  
That a lifetime’s not too long  
To live as friends.  
No, a lifetime’s not too long  
To live as friends.*

Today, in this hour and this place, we sing the praises of the God, who sent to us our friend Roger. Amen and amen.

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# Significant Moments, Sentimental Memories

## Roger's life journey



1925

Born June 24 in Westfield, Massachusetts

1942-1945

Served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps

1946

Enrolled at Aurora College

1949

Received Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Aurora College; Gold Ivy Leaf recipient

1950-1954

Employed for five years with Mutual Trust Life Insurance Company, Chicago

1985

Received the Aurora University Alumni Association Spirit Award

1960

Awarded a master's degree in music from the American Conservatory of Music

1958

Earned a bachelor's degree in music from the American Conservatory of Music

1955

Married Marilyn Bohy

1954

Joined the Aurora College staff

1995

Received the Helena Zentmyer Wackerlin Award for Distinguished Service to Aurora University

1999

Received the inaugural Roger K. Parolini Lifetime Achievement Award

2006

Roger and Marilyn Parolini Music Center dedicated

# Through the Years

## at Aurora University

Roger Parolini served Aurora University in nearly 20 different capacities over a span of 60 years. Undoubtedly, every student, faculty, staff and alumni member has been influenced by his service during the past several decades.

- 1946-1949

Registrar's Office Student Worker
- 1954

Assistant Professor
- 1954-1955

Field Representative and Teacher
- 1956

Registrar's Office Associate (part time)
- 1956-1969

Instructor in Music
- 1957

Registrar's Office Associate (full time)
- 1961-1969

Director of Advent Christian Church Music Program
- 1963

Registrar's Office Associate (part time)
- 1966

Associate Professor
- 1968

Director of Copley Nurses Chorus
- 1968-1969

Director of Caterpillar Chorus
- 1969-1970

Director of Church Relations, Associate in Development and Admission Counselor
- 1971-1972

Director of Development and Teacher
- 1974

Development Associate
- 1975-1976

Associate Professor of Music, Director of Church and Alumni Relations
- 1976-1977

Director of Alumni Relations and Director of Religious Programming
- 1977-1979

Vice President of College Relations
- 1979-1988

Director of Endowment
- 1984-1986

Director of Endowment and Choir Director
- 1986

Resigned as Choir Director
- 1986-1989

Director of Endowment
- 1990

Retired as Director of Endowment (full time)
- 1990-1992

Director of Endowment (half time)
- 1992

Director of Endowment (quarter time)
- 1993

Associate in Planned Giving
- 1994-2016

Director of Endowment and Director of Special Gifts





Roger, the recipient of AU's first Spirit Award, served with an open and willing heart.

# A generous gentle man

*A collection of memories from Roger's friends*

## Eulogy excerpt by Gary L. McCann New England Congregational Church

Roger's passion for endowing and supporting the liberal arts through this institution will be evidenced in countless students who may never know his name but whose education was made possible because of his dedication.

Though we miss Roger's warm smile and sonorous voice, we take our cues for going forward with a hope that is inspired by Roger himself. He instilled in us the joy of music, even if we couldn't sing a note. He taught us to sing even when the dark clouds of disappointment or the storms of tragedy threaten life and limb. His blessed assurance that we could get through life, as with a song, by taking deep breaths, and holding a

note until it was time to move on to the next was a holy encouragement. And then with deft, outstretched arms he would direct us, as he believed God directs us, to that next note, and then the next, until we came to the end. After catching our breath, his playful grin was all we needed to know we'd done well.

He modeled for us what humor can do for maintaining spiritual and emotional balance. He showed us how a smile and a joyful countenance can replace a debilitating attitude with a positive outlook. We will for the rest of our lives take delight in his gracious manner, his witty repartee and his enchanting charm.

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## Eulogy by Joe Dunham

Lines from the poet Edwin Markham were read at the memorial service of T. P. Stephens who was president of Aurora College when Roger Parolini came to work here as a field representative. They were also read at the memorial service for Jim Crimi, who was president of Aurora College when Roger joined the faculty to teach music and direct the college choir. Those lines from the poet are appropriate today at this service:

*And when he fell in whirlwind,  
he went down  
As when a lordly cedar,  
green with boughs  
Goes down with a great shout  
upon the hills,  
And leaves a lonesome place  
against the sky.*

Indeed there is a lonesome place against the sky of the Parolini family, against the sky for hundreds of Aurora College/University alumni, for members of the Advent Christian denomination across this nation and for the community of Aurora, Illinois. Part of the landscape of our lives is gone and Roger will be missed.

The very first Psalm contains this description of a good man:

*Blessed is the man who walks  
not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on His law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
That yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.*

We offer our thanks to God for Roger, who was like that tree planted by streams of water that yielded its fruit in its season. This university, this community, and many

Advent Christians were sheltered by the canopy of his good will and the good he did. And we enjoyed the fruits of the spirit which he produced. As one of his former students put it:

“His loss will be personally felt from the beech grove in Camp Washington, to the shores of the Suwanee River, to the corridors of Aurora University and to the shores of the Pacific coast.”

In the first letter of Peter we find this injunction:

*“Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another.  
As each has received a gift, employ it for one  
another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”  
I Peter 4:9-10*

That was Roger. His hospitality ranged from welcoming students he had recruited to Aurora to providing a place to live for some students and always a welcome to visiting alumni.

*“As each has received a gift, employ it for one  
another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*

Roger’s gift of music touched so many, enriched so many and provided joy to so many. Not only did he teach music and direct the choir at Aurora College, but he directed choirs in four churches in the Aurora area. He and Marilyn presented “Sermon in Song” programs in many, many churches. They had 13 different programs.

It wasn’t exclusively religious music that Roger shared with the community. Many will remember “Indian Love Call” sung with Bette Gebhart (nee Bere) in their duet programs featuring music by Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald as well as Menotti’s “The Telephone” operetta. Roger and Bette were both teaching voice at Aurora College during that time.

From 1956 to 2000 Roger and Marilyn led music for Advent Christian summer camps. They attended up to four each summer covering 18 camps in all.

“

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TO ONE ANOTHER. AS EACH HAS  
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OF GOD’S VARIED GRACE.**

**I PETER 4:9-10**

”



Roger Parolini (right) with former  
AU President James Crimi



One summer they drove 10,000 miles. Roger not only directed the camp music, he recruited students for the college. He also poured oil on the troubled waters of someone upset by some rumor they had heard about Aurora College.

For many of the citizens of the Aurora area Roger Parolini was “Mr. Aurora College,” the Music Man. Many of us will think of Roger whenever we hear someone sing “A Balm in Gilead” or “Take My Mother Home,” “In the Bleak Midwinter” or the “The Prayer of St. Francis.”

Did Roger have a favorite song? Marilyn doesn’t think so. But it might have been “Since I am Found in Thee.” It is a little known gospel song, copyright 1935. You see, when Roger came to his first job at Aurora College in 1954 he sang that song at some program. He needed an accompanist and so he met the lovely Marilyn Bohy.

*“As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*

Roger had the gift of encouragement. There are persons across this nation who would express their gratitude for his counsel and encouragement. His support and volunteer work for Wayside Cross Mission gave substance to that encouragement.

Of course, anyone who spent any amount of time with Roger would remember his wit and humor. I remember one dear lady in her 80s who had asked Roger to sing at her funeral. She approached Roger and me (at a program or a restaurant) and said to Roger, “Remember, you are going to sing at my funeral.” Without skipping a beat Roger pulled out his pocket calendar and asked, “What was that date, again?”

(I was invited by Roger to speak at a men’s prayer breakfast. He explained that I would speak after a time of prayer, which would follow the “organ recital.” “The what?” I asked. “Oh you know,” he replied, “my brother-in-law had his gall bladder out, my sister has ulcers, my Dad is to have a stent put in, etc.”)

Roger frequently was an emcee or speaker at college/university events, especially retirement dinners. Roger would usually compose a verse for such occasions. Few would call it poetry (there is a bound volume in the Parolini house with the embossed title “The Poetry of Roger Parolini” but all the pages in it are blank).

At any rate the verses he wrote made good-natured fun of the person being honored, and the rhymes were wonderfully awful!

*“As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*

Roger employed the gift of good will. As his son Steve wrote,

**“My dad was a different kind of superhero — the quiet, humble kind who always left a trail of good will. When he walked into a life — and he walked into so many lives — he did so with grace, offering generous gifts of encouragement, kindness and laughter. I think he would have gladly shared all three even if it meant he could keep none for himself. He was that kind of man. But he never ran out.”**

Roger Parolini was an ambassador of good will. He truly was an ambassador for Aurora College/University. He was an ambassador for and to the Advent Christian denomination. And he was an ambassador for his faith. In that faith he had the hope and expectation to see us again at that Great Gettin’ Up Morning!

Thanks be to God for Roger Parolini.

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Not only did Roger teach music and direct the choir at AU, he directed choirs at four churches in the Aurora area.





Roger infused a love of literature into his love of music, passing that appreciation on to his students.

## One-of-a-kind Spartan spirit

*Alumni honor a caring classmate*

The Alumni Association celebrated Roger's role in the perpetuation of all things Spartan with the 1985 presentation of the first Alumni Spirit Award. The award read:

"Everyone here tonight knows Roger K. Parolini. He has been a part of Aurora College/University for 40 years, and the institution is richer because of that.

Roger's responsibilities at the university are as varied as the talents and interests of the man himself; but regardless of the project or assignment, he has always completed each of them with a high level of enthusiasm, commitment and expertise. At present, Roger serves as university choir director and director of endowment as well as advisor to the Alumni Association. In these capacities, he has met with and touched the lives of thousands of people. He is a poet without parallel in all of literature, and his unique sense of humor and love of music has enlivened many an occasion and brightened the lives of everyone. A man of the highest personal integrity, Roger is respected by all who know him. His love of and devotion to the ideals and people of this institution nurture the Spartan spirit in all of us.

And so, in recognition of his unselfish contributions and steadfast loyalty to the Alumni Association and all its constituents, we are proud to present the first Alumni Spirit Award to Roger K. Parolini."

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## With love and devotion

*Recognition for distinguished service*

Devoted to Aurora University for more than 60 years, Roger Parolini embodies the spirit of service. His dedication to the institution was acknowledged in 1995 with the presentation of the Helena Zentmyer Wackerlin Award for Distinguished Service to Aurora University. The award read:

"The Helena Zentmyer Wackerlin Award for Distinguished Service is granted to those individuals whose lives are testimony to the university's motto of character and scholarship and whose service to the university is selfless and exemplary. Be it hereby known to all present that Roger K. Parolini has been named the recipient of the Helena Zentmyer Wackerlin Award for Distinguished Service to Aurora University by action of the Aurora University Board of Trustees this 28th day of May 1995.

Aurora University recognizes Roger Parolini as a compassionate humanitarian who gives freely of himself and his talents. Roger Parolini entered Aurora College in 1946 and has been associated with this institution almost continuously since. He has been associate professor of music (and has led the *alma mater* at almost every commencement since he joined the faculty in 1954 — in fact, he is one of the few who knows it), director of college choir, director of

church relations, director of alumni relations and director of endowment. Even in partial retirement he continues to build the university's endowment as an invaluable ambassador of good will for the university. He has been dedicated to enabling others to realize their opportunities to invest in the future of this institution.

He has directed choirs and musical groups up and down the Fox Valley and across the nation. He has given countless musical programs to innumerable organizations in this community. His unique sense of humor and love of music have enlivened many an occasion at the university, in our community, and at alumni gatherings and church meetings across this country.

As the first Aurora University Alumni Association Spirit Award citation said of him, 'his love of and devotion to the ideals and people of this institution nurture the Spartan spirit in all of us.'

The Helena Zentmyer Wackerlin Award for Distinguished Service is proud to honor Roger K. Parolini as a dedicated servant of God, and servant to his community, his university, and his fellow man."

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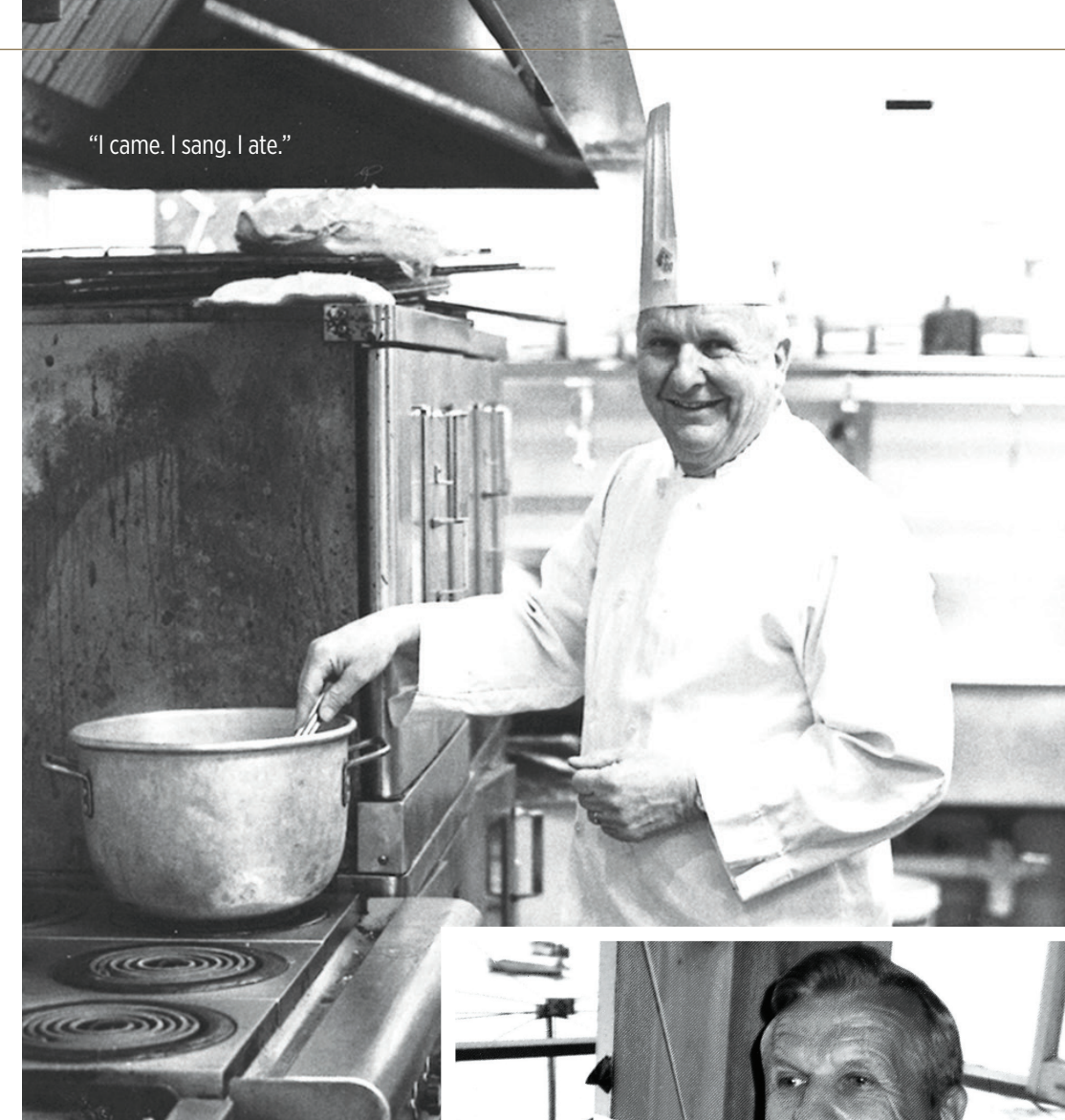


## A clever sense of humor

Roger often made jokes to create a special bond with a colleague, alum or friend. One of his favorites was with Maggie Sharrer, assistant to the president. Each summer, when Marilyn and Roger headed to Camp Bethel, Maggie knew that soon a disreputable used lobster bib would arrive to the office — inscribed to her with a handwritten note about a wonderful dinner that she did not enjoy.

Roger was a preeminent good sport, who graciously absorbed the efforts of others to be funny. In 1990, the university community feted him with an evening of memories and memorials titled “Music, Miles, Meals and Money.” The occasion was complete with a Latin subtitle that translated read “I came, I sang, I ate.”

In a column written for the university magazine in 2001, Roger acknowledged the vulnerabilities of memory loss and then turned to several of his favorite subjects ... key signatures, hymns and good food. He recalled in vivid detail a number of fine meals and shared news of an important new scientific theory. Roger had discovered a direct link from his stomach to the memory part of his brain. He then proposed that friends serve distinctive dishes when he visited — rack of lamb or cheese grits or bouillabaisse. Such offerings, he promised, would help him remember and would perhaps even lead to recognition in subsequent alumni magazine columns.



And always, always Roger served his college and university with an open and willing heart. When asked to resume his work as choir director in the mid-1980s, Roger seemed to hesitate. But soon rehearsals started. Chapel appearances and a Christmas concert followed in quick succession. And then it was time for the Choir Tour. Once again, Roger took to the road with a busload of students. Not much had changed, he reflected later. Students still ate “anything and everything in sight” and lost clothes, textbooks, eye glasses and music with great frequency.

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## Community recollections

“Roger’s years of service were a **reflection of Biblical servant leadership**.

He always represented the college with grace, love and joy. He was the kind of teacher who became a lifelong friend. He shared his love of music in ways that brought joy to performers and audiences alike. We had the privilege of traveling with the college choir and we cherish those memories that will last a lifetime. Thank you, Roger, for being an example of living for Jesus in a world that desperately needs men and women of character who **care more about the individual than personal success**. May the memory of Roger K. Parolini live on in the hearts of those who were blessed to know him. And may his legacy be shared with AU students today and into the future. A life worth honoring and remembering forever. We love you, Roger.”

— Dick and Nancy Beggs, Class of 1961

“Roger Parolini was THE best choir director we have ever had! He had us doing things we didn’t know we could do. He did it with humor, ‘weird’ faces and love of music — and us. Bill and I both learned so much from him. We were fortunate to have him as our church choir director for many years after college, too. He was definitely one of a kind. We were **blessed by him and the life that he led**. Looking forward to singing with him again when our Lord returns. What a choir that will be!!!”

— Bill and Barb (Bambe) Wrought, Class of 1963

“Roger was ‘Mr. Aurora University.’ He wore many hats while employed there and **touched many lives**. Because of Roger and Marilyn’s influence, many students came to Aurora and much financial support was raised to benefit our university. We doubt that there will ever be another like Roger at AU again. Roger was an admirable person in so many impressive ways. His commitment to the community of Aurora, Aurora University, friends, family, tennis, pingpong, swimming, music, food, fun, bad puns and bad poetry are well known. Roger clearly possessed and displayed intelligence, musical and athletic abilities, loyalty, generosity, humor, and a **congenial and upbeat spirit**. Roger will be missed deeply by all of us who had the blessed privilege of knowing him.”

— Kent and Barb Smith, Class of 1957

“... Roger was **‘Mr. Advent Christian Music.’**

He was able to relate to all ages in every region of our denomination. His style was relaxed and witty. He made everyone that he encountered feel special. He was able to take a group of lay musicians that often included nonmusicians and work with them to produce anthems and song services they were proud of.”

— Rosemary Humbles, Class of 1966



# A musical *legacy*



To pay tribute to the decades of service by Roger and Marilyn Parolini to Aurora University and the Advent Christian Church, a music center on the AU campus was named in their honor in 2006. The facility, which symbolizes their passion for music, houses an ensemble room, classroom and practice rooms as well as faculty offices. The center supports undergraduate programs for voice and keyboard as well as music lessons for community residents.

The arts continue to flourish on campus, with frequent concerts by student groups and professional musicians. Both music majors and students from other disciplines are involved in AU ensembles and take advantage of the voice and piano lessons offered by accomplished faculty.

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On the tennis court, Parolini was both master and student.

# I can see the tennis courts

by Tim Parolini

Delivered in Crimi Auditorium, June 15, 2016

Those of you who have lived nearby or who attended school at Aurora years ago will recall that the site where Dunham Hall now sits used to be the tennis courts. As children, we collected many a tennis ball that had been launched over the fence and ended up in our front yard at 238 South Randall. Dad was an avid tennis player and the courts were close, so we spent countless hours on that painted green concrete ourselves, squeezing our way through the narrow passage between the fence and the old Quonset hut on the way.

Every summer, though, we would spend much of our time on the road. North and South, East and West. From Presque Isle, Maine, to Idyllwild, California. Dowling Park, Florida, to Nooksack, Washington. To Advent Christian camp meetings and vacation Bible schools. Swims in lakes. Snack bars. Evening services in the tabernacle. And yes, “Blessed Assurance.” We slept in knotholed cottages whose nearest bathroom was often down the hill. And we rode in cars whose only air conditioning was an open window, eating Cup a Soup in our seats so we could reach our destinations on time.

One summer, we returned from a trip that had taken us to camp meetings on both East and West Coasts.

When we finally turned onto Randall Road somewhere up around Elgin, Dad called back to us and said, “I see the tennis courts.”

In subsequent years, of course, this became a game, to see who could say it first as soon as we turned onto Randall. “I see the tennis courts” meant that after a summer of travel, our long journey was ended, and we were nearly home.

Growing up with the school as our backyard, it was impossible not to notice how Aurora College people treated each other. With love, acceptance and sacrifice. Whether it was faculty members taking in students who couldn’t go home for Thanksgiving, or even providing a place for them to live throughout the school year — as Mom and Dad did for so many years — this has always been a place where “character” was not just a word slapped onto a logo — it was the essential thread woven into the very fabric of the institution.

So while the school has grown and changed in many ways, it’s reassuring to us to know that in this place that has defined so much of *our* lives, this fundamental trait remains intact.



People like to talk about legacies. *You've got to leave a legacy. What do you want your legacy to be? Oh, he left quite a legacy.* What is Roger Parolini's legacy? That old Quonset hut next to the tennis courts that he loved so much is now the Roger and Marilyn Parolini Music Center. That's part of his legacy. His children are another. I look at Mark and Steve and Martha, and I see compassionate, encouraging, generous, kind people. Individuals who are musical. Good with words. Smart. Funny. I see Mom and Dad. I marvel at the fact that we still all like each other so much. As a parent, I often say to Mom, "You went four for four. How did you guys do it?" I'm not sure she knows, but whatever she and Dad did, it worked.

You know, it's impossible to describe who Dad was with just a few remarks. He was kind, humble and generous to a fault. Always willing to share a smile and a laugh. He was as clever as they come. He could sing like an angel. He was larger than life.

The key to Dad's life was his dedication to service. He was a man of deep faith. He didn't wear his faith on his sleeve, but he lived it out every day of his life. To the Advent Christian Church and to Aurora College and then Aurora University. In fact, it probably wouldn't surprise any of us to learn that the color of the blood running through his veins was Spartan Blue. He loved this place and its mission. Even more, he loved the people it allowed him to come to know.

When he was traveling around the country fundraising, I used to kid him — well, I was actually serious — that the school should be paying him a commission on all the money he raised. I had an ulterior motive. I had calculated that at a reasonable percentage, it should be at least enough to deliver a swimming pool to our backyard.

Dad, of course, always laughed it off. One time, he explained to me that the riches he found in the relationships and the friendships he had been blessed with and nurtured over the years far outweighed any monetary reward. *Yeah, but Dad, the pool...*

I suspect that he would still make the argument today that he was rewarded far more richly by his experience here than anything he contributed.

He would be wrong, of course. He and Mom sacrificed a lot, and they achieved so much more.

“  
**THE KEY TO DAD'S LIFE  
WAS HIS DEDICATION  
TO SERVICE.**  
”

But before we lionize Roger Parolini, I need to share a trait of his that doesn't get as much play as his gentle, encouraging spirit, his witty sense of humor, or his mastery of music both sung and conducted. And I have to be honest. This trait could be rather dispiriting. You wouldn't associate it with Dad. Unless you played him in tennis. Or racquetball. Or pingpong. Or basketball.

For being such an easygoing, laid-back guy, Dad had a competitive streak evident even on the small concrete basketball court behind our house. He and Steve played a lot of one-on-one games there. Dad's confidence was Jordanesque, and he had the array of moves and shots to back it up. Every so often, he would allow himself a visible moment of self-satisfaction. He might drain a dozen 15-footers in a row, then with an expression bordering on a smirk, simply say, "Still got that old magic."

His pingpong battles in the basement with Mark were legendary, neither one willing to concede. And Martha can attest to his relentless pursuit of perfection on the tennis court. There, Dad was both student and master. He never stopped learning from his

opponents — assimilating their strengths and then punishing their weaknesses. Tenacious. Relentless. Crafty. As comfortable between the white lines as he was in the choir loft. No matter what you threw at him, he would just keep returning the ball until you missed — running you all over the court in the process.

He did this with amazing efficiency. And of course his usual smile and wit.

One quick aside. When Dad was 70, Kerry and I were living in New Jersey. Mom and Dad always stopped to visit us on their way back to Illinois from their cottage at Camp Bethel in Connecticut. So Dad and I played tennis. It was hot and humid. Just the way he liked it. I might have gotten one game off of him in two sets, though that might just be me seeing the past through rose-colored glasses. If I did, it wasn't because he gave anything to me. That's just not how he played. And I tried my hardest. At the time, I was embarrassed to have lost so convincingly to my 70-year-old father. But I was proud of him too, and I was happy to see the joy that winning gave him. He was just that kind of guy. You always wanted good things to happen for him.

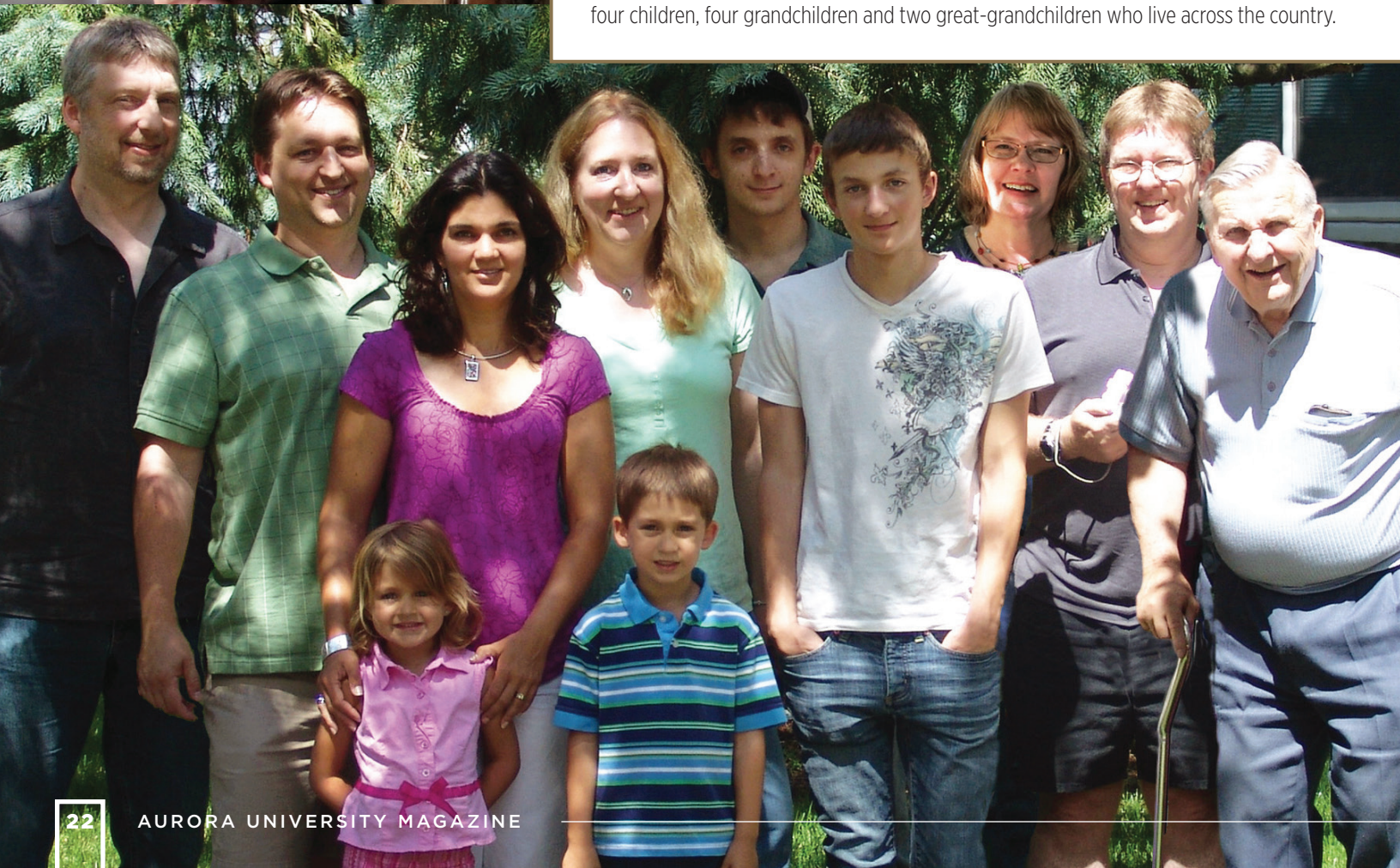
I don't know if Dad ever wished for a different life. A professional opera singer perhaps. He had the voice, and while he maybe never felt like he was quite







Roger's generous spirit and gregarious personality is echoed in his family, which includes four children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren who live across the country.



good enough, he knew that he was good. We would sometimes listen to his old solos or the Aurora College Choir and Male Quartet album. Near the end of "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled," we knew what was coming and would listen intently as he hit that high B-flat with such power that it still gives chills. Or "Open My Eyes That I May See," which he ends one half note lower. He would hold up his finger to say, "Wait for it." Then that sweet falsetto so pure of tone would float out of even the cheapest speakers and pierce your heart. In the silent moment that followed, he would simply say, "Pure gold."

The tenacity that propelled Dad on the tennis court showed up in his pursuit of musical excellence — in singing and teaching voice and in directing choirs of all ages and abilities. If you sang in one of his church choirs or college choirs or youth choirs, you know. He always gave his all and expected everyone else to do the same. The funny thing is that while he inspired people to do their best, he was also the kind of person you just didn't want to let down. So you tried harder. He inspired confidence. Even when you thought a concert or service was going to be a bust, Dad would say, "It will be fine." And it always was. He trusted himself, and he trusted his singers.

Dad tirelessly recruited a lot of students to Aurora. And when he moved over to alumni relations, his target audience changed, but his enthusiasm and commitment never waned. Dad continued to traipse across the states, somehow always magically arriving at dinnertime, to cheerfully loosen the wallets of alumni on behalf of their *alma mater*. He met with people with large bank accounts, but no knowledge of Aurora University — and was often rejected, but returned time and time again to convince them that this was a worthy place and that their investment would yield a significant return. He was an optimist. When something did go badly wrong, his response was, "Eh, that's the vicissitudes of life." And he moved forward.

And people gave. And they still do. Why? Because Roger Kenneth Parolini was an authentic man, a humble servant in the relentless pursuit of a worthy life. Whether it was on behalf of Aurora University, serving in Rotary, volunteering at the Wayside Cross Rescue Mission, working on the Fox Valley Prayer Breakfast, directing one of his many church choirs, or leading the music at an Advent Christian camp meeting, Dad's life was one of cheerful service. He was like a light that brightened the lives of everyone in his presence.

As most of you know, Dad's favorite poem was Edwin Markham's "Outwitted."

*"He drew a circle that shut me out —  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win:  
We drew a circle that took him in!"*

That was Dad. Never knew a stranger. Just friends he hadn't met yet. Always drawing circles. Bigger and bigger and bigger circles. Drawing people in with his considerable charm. His wit. His warmth. It didn't matter who you were or where you were from. Dad's approach was always "Come on in and join us." If you had the good fortune to be inside Dad's ever-expanding circle, you felt good. You felt valued. You felt loved.

Some of you probably know that when he was in high school, Dad harbored hopes of attending Cornell University in New York. I don't know if he would have qualified academically or found the money to attend. But a group from Aurora College came and sang at the Westfield Advent Christian Church that his mother, Alma, faithfully attended. Instead of going south and pursuing his dream, he turned west and took the road less traveled.

As we take stock of his life and the legacy he left behind, consider this for a moment. What if Roger Parolini had gone to Cornell? Picture this university. The churches he served. Camp meetings. This extended community. Imagine your own life, the lives of your family and of your classmates — and of those who came here before you and those who followed after. Imagine all of that without the ongoing presence and influence and the unique spirit of Roger K. Parolini.

Dad's long journey has reached its penultimate turn. He can see the tennis courts, and he's nearly home. Those of us in this very room — and all the other people whose lives he touched — we are his legacy. His light may have gone out, but each one of us carries some of his light with us. Let us use it to go forward and brighten the lives of others. To be generous. Encourage and bring cheer to others. Make sacrifices for a worthy cause. Spread the love of Jesus. Smile more. Make others laugh. Sing our own songs. Write our own bad poetry. Give grace. Be welcoming to strangers. Show compassion. Be kind. Grow our own circles. And shine our lights brightly in a world that needs all the illumination it can get.

Dad would like that.

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*Portions of memorial service remembrances have been edited for publication.*





Roger Parolini, over his many years of service, made Aurora College/University "a place of true learning and home to the arts."

# Roger Parolini Endowed Professorship in Music

In memory of Roger Parolini's profound impact on Aurora University, the university hopes to establish a Parolini Professorship in Music. AU will match all gifts to this new endowment fund as we ensure together that music will continue to occupy a prominent place in our liberal arts curriculum. Roger and Marilyn have provided more than 100 years of service to the university in a variety of capacities. Their unwavering commitment

to their faith, to music and to the university influenced generations of students at Aurora College and Aurora University.

The endowment will generate income in perpetuity and by doing so will continue the commitment to music that Roger Parolini demonstrated during his tenure as choir director, professor and administrator.

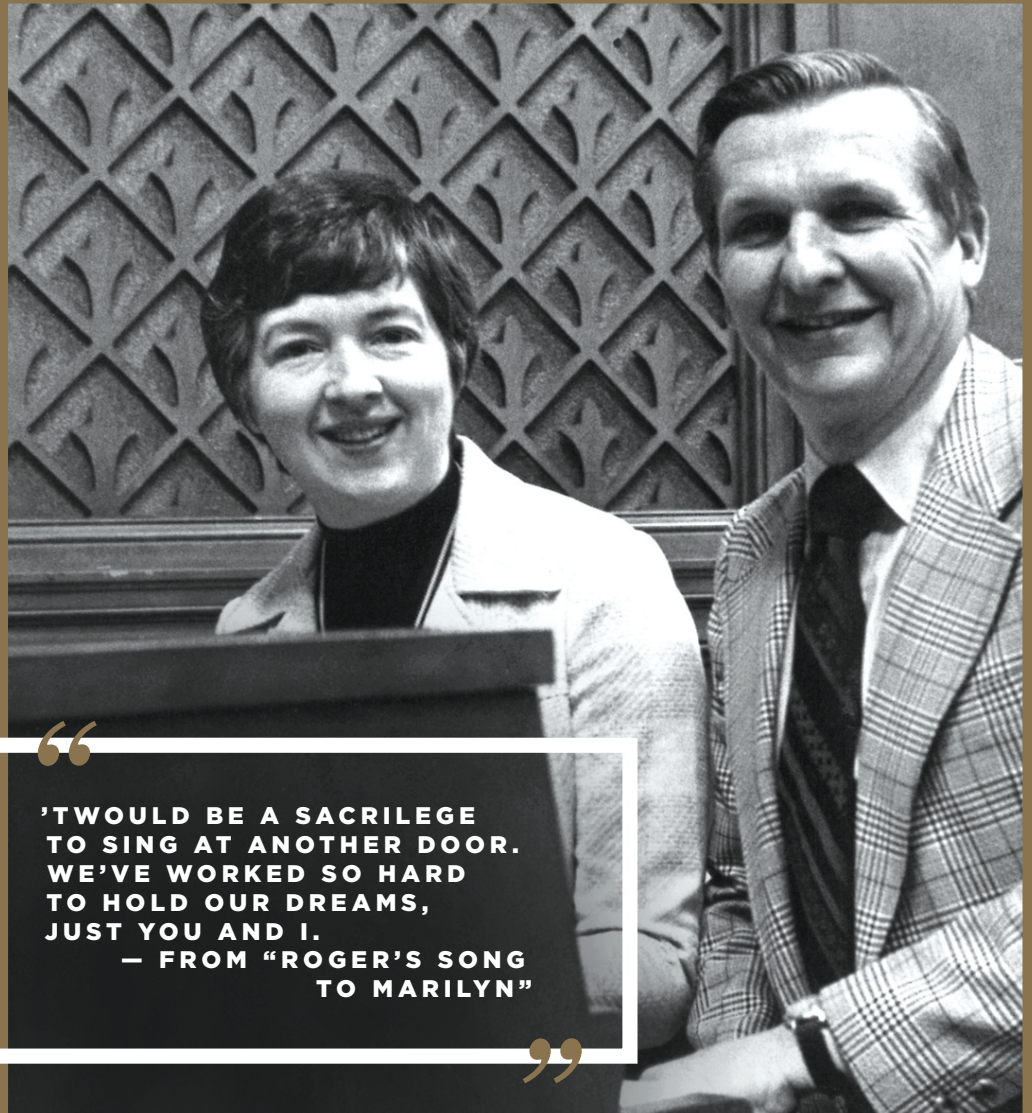
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## How Can I Keep From Singing?\*

\*When we consider Roger's presence in the life of the university — the roles he played in both ministry and music — how can we keep from singing?

*My life flows on in endless song;  
above earth's lamentation,  
I catch the sweet,  
though far-off hymn  
that hails a new creation.  
No storm can shake  
my inmost calm  
while to that Rock I'm clinging.  
Since Christ is Lord  
of heaven and earth,  
how can I keep from singing?  
Through all the tumult  
and the strife,  
I hear that music ringing.  
It finds an echo in my soul.  
How can I keep from singing?  
What though my joys  
and comforts die?  
I know my Savior liveth.  
What though the darkness  
gather round?  
Songs in the night he giveth.  
The peace of Christ  
makes fresh my heart,  
a fountain ever springing!  
All things are mine  
since I am His!  
How can I keep from singing?*



“

**'TWOULD BE A SACRILEGE  
TO SING AT ANOTHER DOOR.  
WE'VE WORKED SO HARD  
TO HOLD OUR DREAMS,  
JUST YOU AND I.**

**— FROM “ROGER'S SONG  
TO MARILYN”**

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