

Anne Brown INTERVIEW

Laura Locke

Welcome, Anne. I'm looking forward to this – and I really appreciate your willingness to take part in our Parishioner Interviews project. So, let's start! Can you tell us your full name, and where you were born?

Anne Brown

Yes - Anne Julie Brown. I was born in Plymouth, England. My father was from England; my mother was Canadian. There's a whole long story about how they met in Bermuda.

Laura Locke

Intriguing! Please tell me more about your parents, and what they were doing in Bermuda!

Anne Brown

My mother grew up in Chapleau, in northern Ontario. From talking to her and others, I came to understand that if you come from a very small community, you're one of two types. You either never want to go anywhere else, or you can't wait to get out. My mother was in the latter category. She wanted to go somewhere that wasn't so bitterly cold! So, she trained as a legal secretary in Toronto, and then she went to Bermuda, at a time when travel in the Commonwealth was very easy. My father, who was in the Royal Navy right after WWII, was on a ship stationed for a time in Bermuda. There were many Canadians who served alongside Royal Navy, so there was an 'expat gathering' of some sort, and that's how they met. Of course, inevitably, my father was posted back to the U.K. So, he and my mother conducted a four- or five-year correspondence, in which he kept encouraging her to come to England, while at the same time he was trying to get posted back to Bermuda. But as it turned out, a Bermuda posting was bit of a plum, unlikely to be repeated.

Eventually, my mother saved up enough money for passage to England – and a return passage as well, just in case things didn't work out. She arrived in England in 1953, and my parents were married in December of that year. My father was still serving in the Royal Navy, and he was posted to Plymouth, in southwest England. I was born in June of 1955. By then, my parents decided they really wanted to move to Canada to raise their family. So, my father managed to transfer to the Canadian Navy, as an engineer. His first posting was to Belfast, Ireland to the Harland and Wolff shipyard where they were building the HMCS Bonaventure, Canada's one and only aircraft carrier ever. When it was commissioned, he came over to Canada aboard the Bonaventure, and I accompanied my mother on a passenger ship. Of course, since I was born in England, I couldn't travel on my mother's Canadian Passport. So, though it was very uncommon at the time, I had my own passport, and in my photo I looked like a generic baby. I had learned to speak a little by this time, and I'm told that I spoke with an Irish accent! So anyway, we arrived in Canada. My father's first posting, now as a member of the Canadian Navy, was to Halifax. My brother was born not long after we settled in Canada, and we moved back and forth a bit from Halifax and Dartmouth to Ottawa. Ultimately my father stayed in Ottawa for the rest of his naval career, and that's where I really grew up. I started school in Halifax, but we moved to Ottawa when I was only part way through grade two.

Laura Locke

Looking back on those early years, are there some things that really stand out in your memory?

Anne Brown

Oh, lots. Early on, I developed a great love of reading. And when my brother and I were still fairly young, my parents – having traveled extensively themselves – instilled in us a love of travel. So, I certainly remember all of that from my childhood. Another memory is that my father would take us on "mystery tours" on the weekends. He would have in mind some destination, and he would challenge us to guess what the destination might be. My parents were also very keen on taking us to a nice restaurant for brunch after church on Sundays. We enjoyed this very much, and if we were inclined to misbehave at church, there would be the threat of 'not going to brunch'.

Laura Locke

I always think it's kind of funny, looking back and remembering some of the family traditions that our parents came up with. What values do you think you've carried forward from your parents?

Anne Brown

Well, I would think certainly open-mindedness, and an open spirit, with an interest in many things. My father was a typical engineer. He was always curious. Sometimes I thought he was happiest when things were broken, so he could fiddle around with them and try to fix them! He certainly had an inquiring mind. I think my parents showed us this 'openness'; an openness to other people, and other ways of doing things, and an interest in a much wider world – as well as good, wholesome things like being kind and sharing. Wonderful, important things.

Laura Locke

So let's talk now about your own work life – your professional journey?

Anne Brown

So, I first went to university at Queen's, in Kingston, Ontario, in 1972. I studied at Queen's for four years and came away with an Honours BA in Economics. Then I went to England and worked for a year there. There was, at the time, a family firm that had thrived mostly under my grandfather. They were Literary and Fine Arts agents, and by the time I went to England, they were in the business of supplying academic periodicals to North American University Libraries. That was the bulk of their business, but they still had a little bit of the antiquarian business, too. So I took the Stefan Batory, a Polish cruise ship, from Montreal. I got off in Southampton, and then I worked in England for a year. And when I came back to Canada, there'd been the change of government in Quebec, and the first separatist government had been elected. Growing up in Ottawa, my gravitation to a 'big city' had always been to Montreal rather than Toronto. So I thought, "Oh, well, I'll go up to Montreal and see how it would be for an anglophone working there." So off I went. By that time, I'd sent off various résumés in Ontario, too – and then I found an ad for the Banff Springs Hotel. They were looking to hire all sorts of people. So I thought, "Well, if I don't get anything else, I can always go west and ski and wash dishes!" So, I sent them a resume, and they thought that since I had a degree in economics, I could probably handle payroll. I was offered a job as a payroll clerk, which I accepted!

There was an air traffic controller strike at the time, so I went out by train, which was a magnificent experience. I arrived in Banff in August of 1977, and worked for the Banff Springs, and then for a full year for Chateau Lake Louise. I was the Human Resources Manager and Payroll Supervisor there. When that year was done, I transferred to the Palliser Hotel in Calgary, where I worked as Human Resources Manager for a couple of years. But I'd always wanted to go to law school – and I was finding the Human Resources area very challenging because people didn't usually take much notice of my advice! Very frustrating. I wanted to do something where I could actually make a difference. I applied to law school, and was accepted at the University of Calgary, as well as a couple of other places...but by then I knew I wanted to stay in Alberta. So I

went to law school and graduated in 1984 and articulated and stayed with a mid-sized litigation firm for five years. Then I spent eight years at the Prosecutor's Office, doing all sorts of prosecutions. After that, I spent three years doing enforcement work at the Securities Commission. They started doing prosecutions under the Securities' Act, and thought it would be a good idea to have people with prosecuting experience to do that. So, I made that transfer, and I had some interesting cases, but I really missed the more formal world of Criminal Law and Constitutional Law. So, then I took a position in Specialized Prosecutions back with the province, and I was the first Organized Crime Prosecutor in the province.

That's what I was doing in 2003 when I was appointed to what was then called Provincial Court (now called Alberta Court of Justice). I was appointed to the Criminal Division in Calgary. Here in Alberta, we have the luxury in Calgary and Edmonton of sitting in separate divisions. It was a dream position for me. That's what I've been doing ever since. I switched to part time work in November of 2019. It's a very nice situation – we can adjust our schedules to accommodate different stretches of time working and not working, but we do have to do half of a full-time judge's time. I typically work for roughly two months full time, and then I'm off for two months. I'm also a Deputy Judge in the Northwest Territories. I've been doing that since 2005, and I'm one of a handful of judges who can hear cases in French.

Laura Locke

It sounds like you're still busy!

Anne Brown

Yes, I'm still sitting. And because I recently turned 70, I have to be renewed year by year, making sure that I'm still competent.

Laura Locke

Which I guess makes sense.

Anne Brown

Yes. I can do that until I'm 75 – and then there is a provision to carry on as a supernumerary judge, which means on an 'as needed' basis.

Laura Locke

Anne, has there been a person, or maybe persons, who really had a significant influence on your life's path?

Anne Brown

Several, I would say! Certainly, some of my early schoolteachers and also an Ottawa Public Library librarian, when I was very young. I would definitely say both my parents, in different ways. And there are also a few very specific people who made a big impression on me. Two of them I've never met, and they both had an important influence on my life. The first of those is Isabel LeBourdais, who wrote the book The Trial of Steven Truscott. She was a journalist. That was really the influence that made me interested from a very young age in being a lawyer, and being involved in criminal law, in particular. Another person of whom I'm a great admirer is Louise Arbour, who was for a time on the Supreme Court of Canada, but really what I find most interesting about her is all the work she did regarding the war crimes trials in Rwanda. She was also the person who drafted an indictment against then-Serbian President Slobodan Milošević at the end of the war in former Yugoslavia. Then she went on to be the Human Rights Commissioner – an amazing woman. I'm such an admirer of her. And on the artistic side, I've also been very influenced by the Quebec director, actor and creator Robert Lepage. Theatre is a huge passion of mine, so I greatly admire what he achieves in the world of theatre.

Laura Locke

Can you tell us a little bit about your family life?

Anne Brown

Yes – my husband Bob and I met about 27 years ago. We met through two different ways. I was prosecuting, and he was covering the City Hall beat for the Calgary Herald. He switched to covering the courts, and at about the same time we both started going to the former St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church, which no longer exists. It used to be on 16th Avenue in northwest Calgary. But while we were there, we both joined the choir – and that's how we met. I have two stepchildren through Bob. I have a talented stepdaughter who's living and working in California right now, and a step-son, daughter-in-law and two young grandsons who live around the corner from us!

Laura Locke

Because you and I are both in the choir at St Stephen's, I know you have a beautiful soprano singing voice. I often sit right behind you in the choir, and I love hearing you sing. Where do you think your love of music has come from?

Anne Brown

Both my parents really appreciated music. I've always sung in church choirs. And in about 1966, Ottawa had, and still has, a really excellent Public School Children's Choir. It was really top notch, and they did auditions at all the schools. So that's where I got really excellent – and free – instruction at a young age. And it was life-changing for me. I remember we did specially commissioned music in 1967, Canada's Centennial Year, and we sang for the Queen. We also sang special music for the commissioning of the opening of the National Arts Centre. That's where my early singing instruction came from; from then on, I sang in choirs all the time. And then, about 35 years ago, I was singing for a time in a United Church choir because I had friends who were going to that church, and they encouraged me to check out the choir. There came an opportunity through the Bar Association to sing in a small group of singing lawyers, who were preparing some entertainment for a convention meeting. In both of those choirs, I was asked to do a little solo. I'd never done solo work, and I did enjoy it – but I was frightfully nervous! I went beet red, and my knees shook. So, my church choir director at the time asked if I might be interested in taking some singing lessons. Her neighbor became my singing teacher, so I started taking singing lessons as an adult. And since then, I've done all sorts of things. Years ago, I went in the Music Festival. And once, I did a small role for the Front Row Centre Players. They were doing the musical "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying". That was quite a while ago, but it was great fun.

Laura Locke

Let's talk a little about the beginnings of your Christian faith.

Anne Brown

My mother had grown up in the United Church, but she joined the Anglican Church when she married my father, so we went faithfully every Sunday, and as soon as I was old enough, I joined the choir, which I loved. When I was about 12 years old, I decided that I didn't really believe in God. So, I told this to my parents. They said, "As long as you're living under this roof, you will go to church." I complied, because I had the choir, and that was really what I needed. Then when I went away to university, I stopped all that. But when I was back home at Christmas in my second year, I sang with the choir just for Christmas. And the choir director told me that he'd been posted in his day job to Kingston, and he said to me, "You should come and sing in the choir at

the church that I've joined in Kingston." I did that, and in that church, I grew to feel that it was important to get that type of spiritual grounding or contemplative time each week.

I pretty much have gone to church faithfully ever since! My own views have evolved – there are some aspects of organized religion that I have a difficult time with, because my belief is that spirituality is really about developing a comfort with mystery. And I mentioned that I went for a number of years to the United Church; I admire the United Church very much, because I think they're very good functional Christians. They really do walk the walk; not just talk the talk. But I think there's more to it than that. There's a certain aspect of mysticism and mystery that I think is really important. And at one point, here in Calgary, I lived very close to St. Michael & All Angels Anglican Church. And I thought, "Hmm ... that's a sign. I think it's time to come back to the Anglican Church." So, that's what I did.

You know, one of my fondest memories from growing up in Ottawa was the midnight church service on Christmas Eve. It has something to do with faith and mysticism. I also remember a midnight service at Christ Church here in Calgary when Herbert O'Driscoll was the priest. I will never forget his sermon, because he talked about the story of the 'inn from the cold', the stable, and how actually accommodation for travelers in Biblical times was really just camping in a yard – and Mary, Joseph and their baby receiving shelter in a stable was actually an upgrade. It was just so fascinating. And even back in Ottawa, I'd had the marvelous John Baycroft as the priest at St. Matthias that we attended for many, many years. He later was the suffragan bishop of Ottawa, and was a magnificent preacher. Herbert O'Driscoll's sermon, and John Baycroft's years and years of sermons really captivated me. I think that one of the powers of Christianity is that the essence of the religion can be very simply expressed, but the challenge is – as I said earlier – walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

Laura Locke

So true. Anne, I'm curious as to how you ended up at St. Stephen's.

Anne Brown

I've been attending St. Stephen's now for about 20 years. I mentioned St. Michael and All Angels Church. There came a time when St. Michael and All Angels was clearly going to be demolished in order to widen 16th Avenue. I was a warden at St. Michael's, and I was very much involved with planning the next moves, which ultimately resulted in an amalgamation with what was formerly St. Cyprian's. That amalgamated church became Holy Cross. Bob and I were at St. Michael and All Angels, and then at Holy Cross, for many years. We were very much involved in the life of that church. We began an Inn from the Cold program there, and were also in the music program, of course. For quite a few years we had Allan Bevan, who's a terrific Canadian composer – very talented – as our music director. Probably two or three years before we ended up coming to St Stephen's, the amalgamation began crumbling, I would say, and both Bob and I found this to be very discouraging. We set about looking for a new church home, and two things were important to us. We wanted a place that was very big on community outreach, and there had to be a good music program. We thought, well, we'll look at Christ Church and St. Stephen's. We knew that St. Stephen's was the first church to establish Inn from the Cold, but we weren't so clear about the music. We went to St. Stephen's first ...and lo and behold, there's Jeff Jones in charge of the music, and Brian Pearson preaching. Wow. We didn't spend much time checking out Christ Church after that!

Laura Locke

What keeps you at St Stephen's?

Anne Brown

It is still a wonderful place. It's super open. It's a bit of an island in the Diocese of Calgary now. And it's still answering all those needs – not only my needs, but the needs of the surrounding community. And that is very important. It's a wonderful place.

Laura Locke

I would definitely agree. Tell us about the some of the roles you play or have played at St Stephen's.

Anne Brown

I have been a warden, and I chaired the Search Committee during the transition period with Brian's leaving, when we found Nicole. That was a great experience. And apart from that, my main ministries now are choir, and I'm also a litanist.

Laura Locke

This has been wonderful, Anne! Many, many thanks for your time today.

Anne Brown

I've enjoyed talking with you, too. Thanks, Laura.