

She's never stopped pursuing the dream

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For the Intelligencer

For a woman who has worn many career hats throughout her life there only seemed to be two roles that truly fit Elaine Small — that of a devoted mother and a famous Canadian supper club singer.

But these two lifestyles didn't marry very well in the 60s when most women were expected to be the "June Cleaver-type" stay-at-

home wives and mothers.

After five years of travelling to perform at high-end hotels and cafés, Small soon had to give up her dream of becoming a professional singer and return home to Toronto to raise her son.

"When I cut it off, I was done with it," said Small who resides in Belleville. "I didn't think about it. That's what happens to people's dreams ... they become their bucket list of things they want to do before they go (die) and they think how great it would be to achieve that."

Small is now resurrecting her music career of 40 years ago and releasing a new CD album with the Brian Barlow Trio and Guido Basso in the fall.

Small pursued a diverse list of careers: X-ray technician, professional singer, European fashion buyer, a real estate agent/investor, B&B operator of Tara Hall in Wellington and

writer. But, deep down, she yearned to write a book detailing her love of family, her passion for music and performing, careers, marriages and religious faith.

So she sat down and wrote a three-part literary memoir titled, "Priests in the Attic," describing her emotional and spiritual journey as a priest's daughter — one of eight children and onto raising children and pursuing her musical dreams.

"It brought up the past and I revealed in the pleasure, the joy and all the interviews I had where I was able to explain how the music has been paramount for me," said Small. "I learned to sing with Peggy Lee in the crib. The house was full of music ... the music floated through the manse."

These memories floated through Small and rekindled her passion for showbiz. As for writing, she uses what life has given

her for inspiration.

"You draw on the past, the past is a gift people at a certain age are losing to Alzheimers," said Small. "When I was young I could never see the forest for the trees because I was running. I wanted the husband, wanted the job, I wanted the kids ... wanted it all. My 30s and 40s are just a blur but there is time now. Revel in who you are today."

"This last part of my life has been the most joyous because you can finally be your own person. People don't realize that, they think I'm too old for this, I'm too old for that. You're never too old, you don't give up, you just continue. If you are just courageous enough to pursue your dreams ... follow them."

Small will be discussing memoir, reverie and the power of song at the John M. Parrot Art Gallery in Belleville today (Saturday) from 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.