



The lifetime adventures of Father Maurice Beauregard, who served some years in St. Albert, are brought to life in print.

## 'Father Beau' an adventurer

**By Bev Rudolfsen**  
*Staff Writer*

Her book is all about the life and adventures of a Catholic priest, but Elise Chartrand-Déry sincerely hopes that everyone, not just followers of the faith, will read it.

"Those who didn't know him, it's like an adventure of discovery. They'll get caught up in his story," the Edmonton author says excitedly. For her, *Maurice Beauregard OMI — Life is wonderful* represents 15 years of work, a labour of love in tribute to an extraordinary person. The sepia-toned book is a his-

### **BOOK REVIEW** **Maurice** **Beauregard, OMI** **— Life is** **Wonderful**

*By Elise Chartrand-Déry*  
\$34.95

torical biography of Father Maurice Beauregard, who spent some of his last years ministering to the St. Albert parish before he died in 1998.

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## Book

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"He had a fantastic life," Chartrand-Déry said. "What struck me was his overwhelming kindness. He welcomed people in a fantastic way. Everyone was always so welcome no matter what the time of day. He was basically almost always on duty."

Chartrand-Déry, who was born into the heart of a francophone family in St. Paul, grew up in Edmonton attending a convent school. Now a voice teacher in private practice, she graduated from the Toronto Conservatory of Music and holds related diplomas from the University of Alberta.

But she found herself turned into a researcher and then writer after she met the man she affectionately calls Father Beau.

"Father Beau came to our parish in 1981. I had been highly involved in the parish with youth. Being a mother of five kids, I wanted things for my children in the parish and if you want something you end up doing a lot. As events went about, I ended up working with Father Beau."

She assisted the lively priest at St. Joachim's Parish in Edmonton



Author Elise Chartrand-Déry

until he was transferred to St. Albert in 1986.

"As events happened, my husband and I and our children ended up involved with the francophone community in St. Albert and again, Father asked me if I'd work with him, continue what I'd started as a pastoral aide."

She'd help organize liturgies, meetings, a pastoral committee and, in St. Albert, she helped the priest start a parish bulletin published in French.

"One day he came along and he had this case full of documents, all kinds of personal papers." Chartrand-Déry was amazed at the range of history collected over the years by the priest. "The historical papers went back to when

he was an army chaplain. I could see a fantastic story there that was begging to be told and would be forgotten if something wasn't done with it."

She began sorting the documents and doing numerous interviews with Beauregard, collecting his memories through words. "I would come home and write it out, go back to him and read it. I wanted to be right." She continued to work on the book even past Beauregard's death. In October of 1997, she shot the poignant photo that graces the back cover. The front one shows a beaming young Father Beau, headed for his first posting to the Northwest Territories in 1942. The back cover shows a picture of the priest walking a quiet street in Roxton Falls, Quebec many years later. "It was the last time he ever walked in his hometown," said Chartrand-Déry.

In keeping with his spirit, she included his favourite saying, starting out with 'Life is wonderful...' on the front cover and ending with '...and worth living' on the back. "Those are the words he used."

The young priest began collecting documents and photographs from the time of his first posting, serving American soldiers in the Mackenzie Valley during the Second World War. He continued to collect them at his parishes in Fort Smith, N.W.T., Fort McMurray, Edmonton and St. Albert. "He had a lot of pictures.

He wasn't consciously building history as such, but was basically keeping close ties with his family."

But the priest's careful chronicling of paperwork provides a useful historical record for whatever decade he was in, Chartrand-Déry added. "I realized research had to be done to find out what was going on in society when things were going on around him. When women's lib came along, how did that affect everyone concerned? I dealt with what was happening in society socially, politically, economically as he was living it."

Her lovingly detailed account unveils a gentle, thoughtful man who was dedicated to his calling, very involved in service clubs, loved to wear white shoes and had a voracious sweet tooth. He also had an ear for everyone who needed it. "All the hospitals had his name and at (age) 80-plus if they needed a priest in the night he would hop in his car and he was gone, he went."

He also had a gift for helping people discover hidden talents — like writing books, said Chartrand-Déry. "I was a product of that. He knew people and encouraged them to surpass themselves. He encouraged them to go beyond what they even dreamed they could do."

*Maurice Beauregard OMI — Life is wonderful* sells for \$34.95. For a list of bookstores call 732-7232 or e-mail the publisher at [info@ortus.ca](mailto:info@ortus.ca)

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