



LASTING FRIENDSHIPS – ENDURING MUSIC
PRESIDENT'S UPDATE
November 2019
IT'S ALL ABOUT DOING THE RIGHT THING

It is November in Michigan. We have already had our first snowfall of the year. For those of us trolls (below the bridge) the snow did not last. For those in the UP and in the Soo, my guess is, you already have significant (for us trolls) snow on the ground, and winter is beginning to take shape.

Our fall Convention is over. Congratulations are in order for all the competitors. What a great set of contests we had. Silver Edition took our District Men's Quartet Championship. Congratulations to father and son team Pollard with Dad Craig on lead, and son Aaron on Baritone, with Bruce Lamarte on tenor and Cody Harrell on bass taking the trophy. What a great sound! Congratulations also goes out to The Heights, the first ever Pioneer District Mixed Quartet Champions! With Christopher Psotka on lead, Neveah Himinn on bass, Harshal Mehta on baritone and Joelle Laginess on tenor, they placed third overall, and took home the championship.

We also placed two quartets in the Senior quartet contest to be held in Jacksonville in January. MonTAJJ qualified to compete with a score of 73.8 (fifth highest score) and Station Break qualified with a score of 71.8 (tenth highest score). Once again, Pioneer is showing the Society that we can hang with the best of them!

Congratulations also goes out to City Lights for becoming the Pioneer District representative to the International contest in Los Angeles in July. A great performance, and we know that you will represent us well at the International Convention. Our Senior Chorus also qualified to compete in Jacksonville. Coming in second overall in our chorus contest, Pioneer Spirit will represent us well in Jacksonville.

The convention was everything you hope our conventions will be. Sure, the contests were spectacular, but look at everything else we offered. We had a trip down memory lane with a one hour presentation by Power Play. We also had a Master Class of sorts with Frontier. What a thrill to have two Gold Medal quartets in our District to conduct classes! We also had a great QCA show on Saturday night with Power Play, Frontier,

and the QCA Chorus. The several other District Champion quartets, like ReMix and the others helped to round out our evening. That is what our conventions are all about.

So, after all that I want to address the heading for this month's letter...IT'S ALL ABOUT DOING THE RIGHT THING! What right thing? Did someone do the wrong thing? How many things are there? So many questions, so little time...

Doing the right thing is almost never doing the easy thing. Doing the right thing requires us to put our own personal feelings aside, and think about what is correct, not what we want. There is something called the illusory truth effect that has been a part of the psychology world since at least the 1970's. It is the idea that if you repeat something often enough, people will slowly start to believe it is true. The fact is that many of us heard this, in different words, from our parents and friends many years ago...we said "Just because you said it doesn't make it so". And so it is with our world today...yes, even the Barbershop world.

BHS says they stand for the proposition that they support "Everyone In Harmony" as a strategic vision. They also state on their website:

We bring people together in harmony and fellowship to enrich lives through singing. Every person who loves to harmonize has a place in our family. (<https://www.barbershop.org/>)

We know however, only too closely, that is not really the case. Not every person who loves harmony has a place in our family. BHS has specific policies that are used to exclude those who love harmony from even being a member of our Society. The policy is used to exclude people who have been placed on a certain list. It makes no difference to BHS what the circumstances were that placed someone on a list, they don't care to hold any kind of review...if you are on the list...you are excluded from our family...period.

Let me give you another example of how BHS will exclude, limit or ignore members. Remember the comments made by our Society Board Members just this past July that they do not represent and are not accountable to the dues paying members of the Society. As such, while the membership who pays dues, and subsidizes the running of the Society have been asked to participate in surveys, the voices of those people (at least the voices I hear at conventions where Society representatives hold forums, are basically ignored, or dismissed, just as the voice of the District President's Council was dismissed in July.

Some of you may know that I was a member of a committee put together by Nashville last year whose initial charge was to review services that BHS provides. The committee was initially called the Service Delivery Team. In our first meeting I asked, and the group agreed to define the terms used in the name. We spent most of our first day together discussing what we meant by Services, what we meant by Delivery and most importantly, to whom we delivered our services.

Well, before long we became the Impact Alignment Team (IAT)... Anyone have any idea what that means? Yeah...me either. So I asked, once again, if we could address the terms so that we would all be on the same page once again. I was told that was not necessary. Well, I never knew what they meant by Impact Alignment Team, but I soon came to know on what it was focused.

IAT has spent the vast majority of its time first preparing a draft of the Memorandum of Understanding (more on that document – the MOU - in a minute) and then, after they drafted the document, spending its time reviewing drafts of several District's MOU's. The MOU came about as a result of the Revised District Bylaws put forth by BHS in January of this year. Remember that the Bylaws are put forth by the Society, and the Districts have no say in the content, they are only governed by them. In those Bylaws BHS required that each District, beginning in the 2020 year, enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the District and the Executive Officer. Why, after 80 plus years, did the Districts and the Executive Officer need to formalize their understanding? We may never know the motivation behind it, but we do know that it is now in our Bylaws.

I started voicing my concern about both the MOU and the process by which the MOU was drafted by a group that was not mentioned in the Bylaws, and was being reviewed by a group that was not mentioned in the Bylaws. I also indicated, on several occasions to Nashville that the document would be effective for 2020 and so it was not for the 2019 Board to draft the document, and bind the 2020 Board, that Board should be the ones to draft the MOU which would be bind them.

I stated to the CEO, the Society President and several BHS staff members how I felt about the MOU process, and that I would work with the 2020 Board to deal with the MOU, but that I would not prepare such a document, and bind the 2020 Board to such a document when that Board had not even been constituted yet. I had repeated to staff in July when I had one-on-one discussions that the MOU would come from the 2020 Board, not the 2019 Board.

So, when I got another email from BHS staff (a little more than a week ago) stating that the MOU was past due to be turned in for review, I stated, in no uncertain terms, that the MOU would be the responsibility of the 2020 Board, and no amount of harassment would result in my drafting a document just to satisfy staff. The 2020 Board will be addressing, among other things, the MOU. It will be up to the incoming president, Joe McDonald, and the 2020 Board to determine what Understanding it will have with the CEO.

Well, I received voicemail the other day from Marty Monson (Society Executive Officer) that I was no longer a member of the IAT. The reason stated in the voicemail was that there was a lack of collaborative effort and so my participation was no longer required. So once again...if you agree with the policy...no problems...but heaven forbid we have people on a committee that don't see eye to eye or jump on the train, then you can't be a part of the process.

Once again, this is the illusory truth principal. BHS will listen to anyone that agrees with them. However, as soon as you take a stance that is not in complete lockstep, you are marginalized, and attempt to silence your voice. Those that know me will know that my voice will not be silenced. I will not go gentle into that good night as Dylan Thomas once said. I will continue to let my opinions be know. I will continue to make my voice be heard. I will continue to speak for those fellow members who do not have the platform to be heard. I will continue to seek to bring out the best in my Barbershop Harmony Society.

The attempts to close off alternative thinking is a means by which the powers that be seek to control the dialog. To frame the discussion and the arguments. To continue to state their version of the facts long and often in the hope that, through the principal of illusory truth, contrary voices are silenced, and the position becomes "truth" through repetition.

I urge all of you to not let your voice be silenced. Ignoring the things that bother you only allows those things to continue to be voiced until they become "truth". It is our right, and our obligation, to voice our concerns, agreement and disagreement with the organization we support with our time, our effort, our voices, and our money. Don't be silent, raise a glorious sound unto the sky!!! Sing your position!!! Be a participant, not an observer. Do the right thing!!!

If, at any time, you have anything you want to ask me, or have the Board review or address, feel free to contact me by email at pio.district.pres@gmail.com. I will do my best to get back to you in an appropriate amount of time, or put you in contact with the appropriate member of the District Board.

Dave Montera
2019 President – Pioneer District