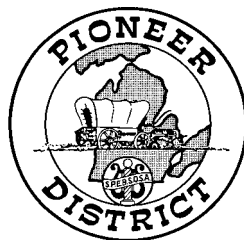


Pioneer Troubadour

Official publication of the Pioneer District
Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of
Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

Volume 53, Issue 3



May/June/July 2002

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Harmony Heritage Chorus, Power Play win spring contests



Macomb County Chapter's HARMONY HERITAGE CHORUS bested a field of 15 to win the Pioneer District's 2002 chorus championship. Directed by Carl Dahlke, the chorus, with 46 singers on the risers, scored 872 points singing "The Church Bells are Ringing for Mary" and "Get Me to the Church on Time."

This was Macomb's first district championship since it won in 1998 under the direction of Jack Slamka.

Lansing's CAPITOL CITY CHORDSMEN finished second with 782 points, Grosse Pointe's LAKE-SHORE CHORUS was third with 777 points, the HURON VALLEY HARMONIZERS was fourth with 762 points, and Holland's WIND-MILL CHORUS was fifth with 736 points.

In the quartet competition, POWER PLAY — tenor Don Slamka, lead Mike Slamka, bari Mark Slamka, and bass Jack Slamka — once again earned the honor to represent the district at the International Convention & Competition in Portland, Ore., in July. This marks the 11th time POWER PLAY has won the right to represent our district. The quartet has finished in fifth place in international competition the past two years, and has been in the top ten four times.

POWER PLAY'S overall score was 2,054 points; that was 85.6 percent of the total points possible. It earned 1,020 points at Friday night's semi-finals, singing "I've Been Working on the Railroad" and "Time After Time."

At the Saturday night finals,

(Continued on page 16)

Accidental Consonance wins district Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Championship

By Al Bonney

Their name may have been an accident, but the singing we heard from this remarkable group of Central Michigan University juniors was no accident.

Scoring 809 points in winning the college quartet contest, ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE would have placed sixth in the district quartet contest had they been eligible to compete.

Nicholas Allen explained the quartet's name. A voice major hoping to become a vocal performer after a master's program at a major conservatory, Nick was browsing through a music history textbook one day and came across the musical term "consonance," meaning, of course, "harmony or agreement among components." This seemed like an apt description for his quartet's sound. Coupling his research with predictable youthful joie de vivre, he couldn't help adding the tongue-in-cheek descriptor "accidental" and the quartet had a name.

Ben Rodgers, a music education major, learned about the Pioneer District and the CBQC contest at the Michigan Music Educator's Convention in Ann Arbor in

(Continued on page 18)



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A View from the Top

Al Bonney, President

It's what we do!

We sing! We have fun singing! We joined this hobby to get together on Tuesday nights and make music with a group of like-minded men. This is not complicated — like Roger Lewis says, “Singing is life ... the rest is just details.”



Al Bonney

It helps me, when the business of Barbershop seems to get too complicated and convoluted, to remember it is all about the men on the risers singing every Tuesday night. That is why O. C. Cash got the first group together at the Tulsa Club — they were all about having fun singing together.

Today, our chapters have mission statements. The VOCAL MAJORITY'S mission might be different from Traverse City's, but that's OK. If the mission identifies why the men keep coming back every week, and if the chapter leadership is doing what it takes to fulfill the mission — and the men *are* coming back every week — then they have a great chapter! The guys are having fun, and I'll bet their chapter is growing because of it!

It sounds simple — and it is. There are, however, a lot of details that chapter leadership must go through — kind of like a duck gliding so smoothly across the top

of the water while under water his little feet are thrashing about at a hundred miles an hour! If we keep the surface stuff simple, the guys love it. Men take leadership jobs because they know somebody has to handle the details and they are willing to do it. Just *don't* let the details get in the way of having fun singing on the risers!

The Barbershop world grew quickly after that first meeting at the Tulsa Club in 1937. Soon there were many chapters across the country. To strengthen what they were doing, chapters formed Associations of Barbershop Chapters to add some force and resources to support fun in Barbershopping. We call these associations districts. These districts provide several resources that chapters can't do alone:

- *We convene* — The Association plans conventions and gatherings where we can see our fellow Barbershoppers and sing together.
- *We compete* — The Association organizes competitions and provides trained judges.
- *We educate* — The Association brings in coaches and trainers to help chapter officers, directors, quartets, and singers grow in our hobby. It organizes events like COTS and Harmony Round-Up to help, too.
- *We communicate* — The Association circulates information of interest to chapters and members

so they can take advantage of opportunities and learn about resources available to them.

The Association was never intended to be a ruling body; it was formed to be a resource provider to help chapters help the guys on the risers have fun every week. If we are meeting this objective, we are doing a good job. If we aren't, then shame on us and we need to be reminded to get our programs back on track.

The current district leadership team is very aware of this imperative, and we speak of it regularly as we go through the details of the Association business. In my view, there are few issues of greater significance to our organization today than the issue of supporting fun for the guys on the risers every week.

So, let's get back to what we do — have fun singing ... every week! And for us guys in leadership jobs at every level, don't get confused if what we are doing doesn't add to the fun in chapter meetings. Maybe it's time to rethink what we are doing!

Register for the International Convention in Portland

It's getting closer! Don't miss out. Register today for the International Convention in Portland, Oregon, June 30-July 7, 2002.

To register, call 800-876-7464 x-8462, or go on-line at www.spebsqsa.org/Portland.

Here's the Society Pitch

Raleigh Bloch, Society Board Member

Get an Attitude and Look Out!

So what are you going to write about this time?

Oh, hi. I thought I'd write about some information I picked up from Roger Lewis and from Mike and Don Slamka of POWER PLAY.

Boy, you're a real name-dropper, aren't you?



Raleigh Bloch

Hey, not only that, I'll find out if they read my articles.

Do you read theirs?

Let's not get into that.

So what did Roger have to say?

He said, "Look out!"

That's it? "Look out?" Look out for what?

Well, he didn't say it quite like that. He said something like, "Organizations that are focused on themselves or inward tend to become stagnant and decline, while organizations that focus on others or outward become vibrant and grow."

That's a whole lot different from just "Look out!"

You're right. I guess he was saying that sometimes we are so focused on our own problems, we don't see the possibilities that are out there and what we might do for others, things that can make our organization more interesting to us and more attractive to others.

Roger is right; there are a lot of

things we can do to reach out that will, in turn, help us.

Yes, but we need to be altruistic about that effort and not just measure our efforts by "What's in it for me?" An excellent example is "United We Sing." You'll be hearing a lot about this very soon. I urge you and your chapter to get involved with this program and follow it to the letter.

OK. OK. So what did POWER PLAY or the Slamka's have to say?

Mike said, "Get an attitude," and Don said, "All organizations plateau and then either go up or down."

Did they say any more about that?

Yes, they said when their quartet plateaued, they went to coaches to get them on the move again.

Good advice.

However, they felt that the quartet's attitude was key. It had to be that the men wanted to do something about it and only they could make the difference. The coaches could tell them what to do, but they, the quartet members, had to do it. The coaches couldn't do it for them. They said, "Then you get the giggles."

What did they mean, "the giggles"?

On their way back from coaching sessions, they would listen to their tapes of the session. They would hear what the coaches said and then hear themselves perform it. That's when they would giggle.

Well, our organization has definitely plateaued in membership.

Yes, and we've got some good coaches in Ev Nau, Dick Bek, and others. But we, the chapters, have to recognize the problem. Then we have to decide to do something about it, get some coaching, and do it.

Then we can look back and giggle.

Wouldn't that be fun? So the moral of the story is ...

Wait. Wait. Let me tell it. "Get an Attitude and Look Out."

There you go again.

Where?

Barbershop notation manual available on the Web

The new *Notating Barbershop Arrangements* manual is on the Web at www.spebsqsa.org/arrangements. The purpose of this manual is to provide direction to members of SPEBSQSA, Inc., who are engaged in notating and editing arrangements either for publication by the Society or for inclusion in the list of Legal Unpublished Arrangements.

To download the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>.

NOTE: If you do not have Adobe Acrobat 5.0, and do not wish to download it FREE, you will need the following two files for the complete manual: 1. BBS Notation, and 2. Shine on Harvest Moon. You must have Acrobat 3.0 or higher version to download these files.

Here's the District Pitch

Brian Dunckel, Member Services VP

Let your Barbershop light shine

In the first quarter of the year here in Pioneer, we had 11 chapters grow, four stay the same



Brian Dunckel

size, and 15 get smaller.

There are many reasons for drops in a chapter's numbers: at the House of Delegates meeting, we honored 12 deceased

members. Others have moved away in retirement or for new jobs and, sadly, some have just dropped out.

The disappointing factor is that, as a district, we are not even keeping up with our losses, let alone growing. Rather than point the finger of blame at anyone, I offer this challenge. Remember the song, "This Little Light of Mine"? One of the key phrases of that song is "hide it under a bushel? NO, I'm gonna let it shine!" To me, that's where many Barbershoppers are falling short.

Have you let your Barbershop light shine? Do you enjoy this hobby? Doesn't everyone else deserve the opportunity to enjoy it as you have? Society statistics show

that 54 percent of our members joined the Society **because someone asked them!**

Sadly, too, in the Jan/Feb *Harmonizer*, it pointed out the fact that 48 percent of Barbershoppers have NEVER received a Man of Note award. I know many of you will say I have asked everyone I know; then try those you don't know! That Man of Note award may be just one more invitation away.

Wouldn't it be sad to know that you missed that opportunity? Don't let it happen! Ask those you know and those you don't. Never let an opportunity pass by.

"Singing is Life." It ought to be more of our life than our membership numbers show.

"Teach the Children to Sing." Even if that child is as old as you are, he can "re-capture" some of his youth with harmony.

"Keep the Whole World Singing." Do you really mean it? What are you going to do about it?

Membership growth? Y KNOT!

Time to make preparations for Flag Day

Consider "United We Sing"

Since 1998, the Society has been part of the National Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance, held under the aegis of the National Flag Day Foundation. Briefly, the National Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance takes place on Flag Day, June 14, at 7:00 p.m. EST.

Across the country, people gather at the appointed hour to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. U.S. Barbershoppers have offered their talent to the observances by performing appropriate patriotic music.

One approach to your performance could very well be the new "United We Sing" program. If you have questions about the program, you can research program information at www.UnitedWeSing.org. There you will find the downloadable script with the recommended songs. Many of the songs are already known by most chapters, and the music is available from Harmony Marketplace.

Planning for these events is normally handled through the office of the mayor or other appropriate government office. Each member city of the League of Cities receives a mailing about the observance.

To learn more, visit the Flag Day site on the Society Web page at <http://www.spebsqsa.org/FlagDay/>. From there you can also visit the Website of the National Flag Day Foundation.

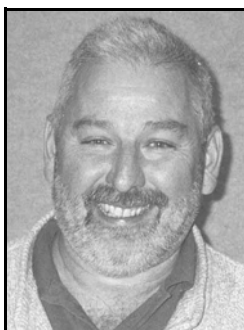
Sing ...
for life!

Public Relating

Greg Humbel, Marketing & Public Relations VP

Marketing & public relations key to growth

Marketing and public relations will always be a key component in the growth of our hobby. At the Society, district, or chapter level,



Greg Humbel

we struggle with good ways to promote our love for music and to share our infatuation with this art form with everyone we meet. We

need to continually develop new and exciting ways to promote our choruses, quartets, shows, guest nights, and charitable mission.

Each of us needs to do our part to get guests to a chapter meeting or guest night. Each chapter must stay focused on providing an exciting chapter meeting with something available for each member to enjoy.

I continue to be convinced that we do a pretty good job of retention of our members once we get an interested man in the door.

Your job, if you choose to accept it, will be to receive a Man of Note award at least once a year because you shared your excitement of your hobby.

I will guarantee you that if you ask someone in your chapter with

several Man of Note awards on their lapel how they were able to do it, he would tell you that he brings up his hobby in his everyday conversations and thinks nothing of it!

Try this: Make 10 personal contacts in a day, week, or month. Share your hobby with five of them and you will have two people minimum to bring to your next guest night. It's marketing! It's a numbers game. Share your hobby today!

Further, and very simply, display something "Barbershoppy" as you meet other people: Use your MBNA Barbershop credit card. Wear Barbershop stuff, like your "Singing is life ... the rest is just details" button from Society President Roger Lewis. Eventually, someone will comment on it, or it will give you an excuse to bring up the subject. And you can take it from there whenever you find a man who likes to sing ... or his wife!

As you move forward to your next function or event, ask yourself if the membership component has been addressed. Ask, what do I do here?

Grow membership!

Sing ... for life!

Ya gotta ask the question!

By President Al Bonney

Anyone who read the January issue of the *Harmonizer* clearly understands the magnitude of our membership challenge. This challenge is no less real in Pioneer. Our membership numbers have dropped every year for the past several years. From all of the research and studies that have gone on to understand how organizations like ours build membership, one clear and consistent truth keeps coming out: "Ya gotta ask the question!"

I gave my last Man of Note award to my wife. She put me onto a guy who was interested because SHE got into a discussion with him, heard his sonorous voice, and asked if he was a singer!

Rob Hopkins, our International EVP, sent me an e-mail about a guy he met in an airport who lives in Traverse City — he asked the question, and now the guy wants to visit our chapter.

Now we all know that you have to kiss a lot of frogs before you find a prince. But ask the guys who have 10 or 20 Man of Note awards; they'll tell you that they ask the question — a lot!

If you ask the question, you will start bringing guests to your chapter meeting, too.

So my challenge is — will YOU go out and start asking the question to people you meet in stores, gas stations, libraries, and airports? With the resources, talent, and fun that we have in this district, there is no reason in the world why our membership numbers are not going up. I know we can do it; I hope you will help.

Chapter Coaching

Doran McTaggart, Chapter Support/Leadership VP

Next spring, will your chapter win a plateau award?

Each April, the chorus contest score sheet shows winners in many plateaus. What are these plateaus and why do we have them? The plateaus group chapters according to their membership.



Doran McTaggart

There are six plateaus, and the highest scoring chorus in each plateau receives a plaque for its achievement. Many chapters can go home with an award for its efforts. Winners of these awards were:

Plateau 1 - (20-29) - Michiana Metro

Plateau 2 - (30-39) - Saginaw-Bay

Plateau 3 - (40-49) - Huron Valley

Plateau 4 - (50-75) - Pontiac-

Waterford

Plateau 5 - (76-99) - Lansing

Plateau 6 - (100+) - (none)

The 2002 District Chorus Champion is Macomb's HARMONY HERITAGE CHORUS. Next spring, will your chapter win a plateau award?

Only half of our Pioneer chapters entered the contest. For those chapters who haven't experienced the joy of singing in the contest for a number of years, plan to do so now. Your chapter coach can as-

sist you. To get you on stage, we will move mountains. What do you need? Money? Uniforms? Voice parts? Coaching? Music? You name it and we'll get it. I mean it! Ask and you'll receive.

COTS changes

No longer will Christmas activities keep chapters away from COTS. Pioneer COTS will be held January 4-5, 2003. It will be at the Holiday Inn Express in Okemos, just southeast of Lansing. From now on, our COTS will be the first weekend of January in Okemos. This site will give us room for expansion. Flint's Doug Lynn will be the new COTS Coordinator and will send COTS information to every chapter in the fall.

Send-Off Show June 14

The Send-Off Show will again be held at the Caboto Club in Windsor. Tickets have been distributed to 15 chapters close to the Canada-U. S. border. The doors open at 6:30 p.m.; the famous pasta dinner is at 7:45 p.m.; and the super show follows dinner.

Eight choruses and a massed chorus of 300 men will sing. Our Pioneer representatives, POWER PLAY, ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE (college quartet winners), and the GREAT LAKES CHORUS will also perform. All this for only \$16.00. Call me at 519-948-0637 for tickets. See you there.

How I got hooked

By Guy Hissong, Flint Chapter

I have enjoyed Barbershop music most of my adult life. I got hooked when I found myself taping the BUFFALO BILLS from "The Music Man" so I could listen in the car. I also found some Barbershop tapes at music stores which hooked me even more.

It wasn't until the spring of 1997 until my in-laws surprised me by taking me to see the FLINT ARROWHEAD CHORUS at their spring show. Talk about hooked! Can you imagine someone telling their in-laws to shut up during the performance when they asked me how I was enjoying it? I just wanted to hear everything and not miss a single thing.

Then a few days later, my wife, who is a pharmacist, spoke to one of her customers who was a Flint Chapter member, Ed Wracan. She told Ed, how much I enjoyed the show. When Ed asked her if I could sing, she responded, "Do you have a shower at the chorus hall?"

Well, Ed picked me up the following Tuesday night; I was totally in awe. I was scared at first, but the guys made me feel at home and in no time were teaching me to ring chords and let loose. Hooked again!

It wasn't until 2000 when I was asked to do Singing Valentines did I have the nerve to sing in a quartet. Really hooked!

And, of course, each time we sing at nursing homes and hospitals and see the looks on the faces and smiles as we sing, now that's getting majorly hooked.

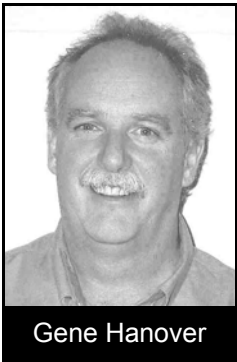
Barbershopping — Oh, what a life!

Take Note

Gene Hanover, Chorus Director Development VP

The secret life of your director

Have you ever thought, “Gee, I wonder what new and exciting things our director has come up with for our rehearsal this week” or “I think I will call the director of my chorus and ask if there is anything that I can do to make his job a little easier this week?”



Gene Hanover

We all know that chorus director has an easy job. It takes little time or thought. Right? I mean all he does is get in front of

the chorus each week and do the same thing week in and week out. How hard can it be?

It's a fairly safe bet that the leads will sing out of tune, just like last week. The basses will be a little flat and forever late coming in throughout every song, just like last week. The tenors could never sing a high third if their lives depended on it, just like last week. And the baritones, well, that's just too easy, just like last week. So, all he or she has to do is give the same old dialog, just like last week.

What about those supposed vocal exercises and drills that they come up with — bubbling, oo'ing, loo'ing, scerasing, endless scales — and those dumb “ear training” exercises never end.

Well, at the risk of getting in big trouble with my brother and

sister directors out there, I am going to give you some information that will make you raise your “poos” and open your throat with fright!

Did you know that we all have this contest to see which director can inflict the greatest pain on our members? That's right. We are in constant contact with each other to create these drills to make you think that we are nuts and should be put away for a long time. Why, just the other day I heard a conversation between the director of Kalamazoo and Michiana Metro that, well, made me shudder.

They talked about meter, pulse, and making the breathing in a song the most important part of the song. They even discussed what exercises to do to get the point across. Then they talked about using your head, chest, and mixed tones while singing.

Then they turned to singing in tune! I mean, really! What is that? Come on, what does that have to do with singing Barbershop? We just want to sing and what comes out is what you get. We couldn't care less about putting that music stuff in the song. Right?

They even had the nerve to talk about how, along with other hobbies, we do our best to learn more about them so we can get better. We take tennis lessons, bowling lessons, piano lessons, and the real biggie, golf lessons, but would we ever take a voice lesson. Who do

they think they are? My voice is good enough and I shouldn't be expected to try to make it better. It was good enough to be born with, so it's good enough for this. Right?

Then we send them to Harmony College/Directors College or Harmony Round-Up, hoping that someone will tell them the way that the real world works, and it just makes things worse. They come home with all that enthusiasm and stuff that only a sadist could invent! Does it never end?

Of course it does. When we lose our director because we refuse to at least try these things to help our singing get better. Or when we allow them to conduct the whole night without a break. Do you know that the number one reason directors leave choruses is that they feel that their work is in vain and just simply give up?

The average director puts in three hours of work each and every day, I said **day**, to prepare for your three- to four-hour weekly rehearsal, only to find that he cannot work on the things that he would like.

As members we can come and go as we like and think nothing of it. You say, “I'm not having fun” or “I don't need to warm up” or “I don't need to work on my notes and words outside of rehearsal.”

Well, guess what. The directors out there need to have fun, too! They don't like warm-ups either! They would rather not have to go over the notes and words as well, but they know that they have to if things are to get better. Our choruses are like our children. We want what is best for them and want them to be the best that they can be.

(Continued on page 9)

Yours 4 A Song

Dan Bezaire, Music & Performance VP

Extra effort to improve results in better performances

Musicians, like golfers, writers, or anyone else interested in improvement, are constantly seeking ways to become better. Barbershoppers in Pioneer



Dan Bezaire

are no different; they have shown that they are very interested in taking steps to become better singers and performers.

For example, for two successive weekends in late February and early March, many of our choruses took advantage of our chorus coaching days. At those sessions — one in Gaylord and one in East Lansing — a total of 12 choruses spent an hour with each of three different coaches. If nothing else, all of these groups came away with tools to work with to improve our craft. The comments from those events were overwhelmingly positive, proving that the singers of Pioneer are willing to put out extra effort to improve.

I believe the spring contest in Lansing bears this out. The level of performance was very high and many of the competitors were among the participants of the coaching sessions.

We are trying to provide as

many opportunities as possible so that we can raise the musicality of the district. Some of the projects underway, or in the planning stages:

Coaches' Directory — With this database — perhaps attached to the Pioneer Website — choruses and quartets can locate a coach who can work with them.

Bush League — This year we are incorporating a quartet coaching clinic along with the traditional contest. Up to 16 quartets can be accommodated. (September)

Harmony Round-Up — Barber-shop classes, quartet coaching, YMIH. (May)

Standing Ovation — Enhancing entertainment value.

Take advantage of these programs. You will hear the difference!

Bad e-mail addresses

The recent bankruptcy of the “@home” e-mail provider has caused numerous e-mail addresses in the Society database to be incorrect. This was brought to their attention after a request for quartets was sent out to a person in the Bay Area in California.

Please use the Members Only site on the Society Web page to update your personal or quartet information.

Take note

(Continued from page 8)

If you don't have a director, look internally and figure out what you have to change to get a good one and keep him. You see, anyone who is a director knows that directing a chorus takes lots of time, and that we have to commit ourselves for that long haul.

If you have a director, you had better start looking at the same things and helping him or her out so you don't lose him. Then train others to help him out and give him a break now and then. We lose far too many good directors every year for dumb, simple reasons that are fixable.

Remember that chapters without good directors usually go under. Chapters with poor, underdeveloped, or disinterested directors never grow. Do all you can to ensure that your chapter does not become a statistic.

Be on time, warm up with the rest of the chorus, learn your notes and words, take an occasional voice lesson, encourage you director, and start to enjoy the better singing that is guaranteed to come from your chorus.

Who knows, you may even be able to get into a quartet as a by-product of your learning! Now, that would really be a shame. Or would it?

Happy singing!

“Quartet singers make better chorus singers.”

Dr. Greg Lyne

Young Men in Harmony

Dave Anderson, District VP

It's time for action!

Your YMIH Team has been very busy since the last issue of the *Troubadour*. Our booth at the MSVMA (Michigan Schools Vocal Music Association) Convention in Ann Arbor was very successful. Many music teachers were exposed to using Barbershop as a means to increasing male interest in their classes. The program session that was held by Bill Rashleigh and POWER PLAY was a hit; they've already begun planning for another session in January 2003.

It was at this convention that we had our first contact with our New College Quartet Champions, ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE. Two young music majors from Central Michigan University kept coming back to our booth to sing tags; we then found out about their quartet, coached by Dr. David Gillingham. You might remember him from 1993 District Champions, FULL CHORD PRESS. The quartet then did an outstanding job in the district competition. According to the numbers provided by Jim Styer, ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE is ranked sixth of all college quartets qualified, based on scores from all of the districts.

The quartet has asked for some monetary help to get to Portland to compete. The cost for airfare is about \$1,200, hotel rooms \$1,000, \$500 for all events tickets, plus some food money. Their total cost can get into the \$3,500 range. The

district has awarded them \$1,000, so they have a shortfall. They are also just returning from a singing tour in China, so their coffers are pretty empty.

Now comes the request for "action" on your part. I am setting up a fund drive for contributions from individuals and from chapters to help these guys make the trip and represent us. The details have not been finalized at this time, but you should hear more through the PioNet on this. Any checks should be made out to "Pioneer District" and mailed to me at: Dave Anderson, 39043 Cadborough Dr., Clinton Twp., MI 48043. Let's all work together and give these four young singers an experience to remember.

By the time that you get this, A CAPPELLA BLAST! 2002 will be history. Many people have worked very hard to make this a quality event for our young men. Please thank Bob Wisdom for handling registrations and other jobs, and thank Ken and Vicki Gibson and their staff for the great teaching job. Also, thank the many chapters that helped sponsor students and get teachers enthused about attending.

In closing, remember to keep in contact with those music teachers and help set things up for when they return in the fall. Please remember to help the college guys going to Portland by sending in a donation ... do it today.

Bulletin Editor of the Year awarded

By District Bulletin Contest Coordinator Elbert Ford

We had a very good Bulletin Editor of the Year (BETY) contest this past year in Pioneer. The entrants were judged on three consecutive issues with a minimum requirement of eight issues published in 2001. The awards were presented at the district spring convention. There were four entries — the highest in four years — with two of them being first-timers.

The contest was won by Elbert Ford. He is in his fifth year of publishing *The Chorister* in the Traverse City Chapter and has placed first for the third year in a row, amassing the highest point total ever in the Pioneer District in this contest.

Last year, he also placed fifth in international competition and won the Dick Girvin Most Improved Bulletin award as well.

He was followed closely by Robert Rancilio of the Grosse Pointe Chapter with his publication, *The Pitch Pipe*. He has been an editor for only two years, but has taken advantage of the mentoring program offered by PROBE.

Bob says, "Bulletin editorship can be an exciting part of being a Barbershopper. In addition to the obvious benefit of getting to know what's going on in the chapter's nooks and crannies, I feel I play a supportive role in the health of the chapter by providing information on such topics as singing techniques."

(Continued on page 11)

The Judge's Corner

Ed Fritzen, Contest & Judging VP

If you accomplished a goal, you're a winner!

I think I've finally recovered from another fantastic weekend of Barbershopping in Pioneer. I



Ed Fritzen

hope all of you enjoyed the spring convention as much as I did. Congratulations to our international quartet representatives, POWER PLAY,

and to our new district chorus champs, the HARMONY HERITAGE CHORUS. They both were clearly the cream of the crop last weekend.

However ... were they the only winners? Not by a long shot; for every man who appeared with a quartet or a chorus on that stage was a winner.

Sure, POWER PLAY and the HARMONY HERITAGE CHORUS scored the most points in their respective contests, but there were many other just as significant successes in Lansing. How about Holland's 5th-place finish, or even more impressive, the 6th-place finish of Michiana Metro?

Both choruses came away winners, as did everyone who accomplished a goal — even if the goal was only to improve a little over the last contest. And isn't that what competing is all about?

I would like to challenge all of the competitors and would-be competitors in Pioneer to set some goal for the next contest. Let me know what it is, and tell me how you did. I will then use this space to publicly recognize and celebrate your achievements. Perhaps this type of thinking could lead to greater participation by our members in our contests. Wouldn't that be great?

That brings me to another aspect of the contests and conventions. The Pioneer District Board is looking at ways to improve all aspects of our conventions.

If you have any ideas on what you'd like to see or do at a convention, please forward them to me. Don't be shy. If there's something you don't like about our conventions, now's the time to speak up.

We want to host conventions that appeal to all members of our district. You'll be hearing more about this in the coming months.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate Don Kill, Al Fisk, and Neil Nugent, who have been accepted into the judging program as applicants and who have been invited to attend Candidate School this summer. Way to go!

Hope to see you all at Harmony Round-Up.

Bulletin Editor of the Year awarded

(Continued from page 10)

They were followed by John Cowlshaw of Pontiac-Waterford Chapter with *Smoke Signals*, and Art Lane of Holland Chapter with his publication, *The Windmill Blade*.

John took over *Smoke Signals* in May 2001. Since then, he has published an issue a month for eight months. He was in Nashville in 2001 for international, and attended the PROBE meeting that first morning. As you can see, it is his first entry also.

Art Lane is a former weekly newspaper editor in Saugatuck. He became editor of *The Windmill Blade* about 11 years ago. The *Blade* has ranked second in the district and competed internationally several times, gaining high marks for grammar and style.

The Society's organization of Public Relations Officers and Bulletin Editors (PROBE) named Art 1988 Public Relations Officer of the Year for a single event for information and promotion surrounding the chapter's singing excursion to the Netherlands.

I would encourage each chapter to publish a bulletin and send in three issues for judging. A chapter bulletin does an invaluable service — disseminating information to its membership.

I would like to congratulate all of the contestants in the BETY contest and encourage any other editors to jump in. The help received from the judges and through the mentoring program is immeasurable!

Quartets Champions Association

Dennis Gore, PR & Communications

The Pioneer District Quartet Champions Association (QCA) met following the district quartet prelims on Friday night, April 26. The meeting included a social hour where discussions about the competition took place.

The members received music and learning tapes for songs that will be performed by the QCA chorus in the fall. Bob Winters has coordinated this effort and it is now well under way. At the end of the meeting, those present read through some of the songs directed by Mike Slamka, Al Fisk, and QCA President Russ Seely.

Thirty-nine QCA members were in attendance. Russ reviewed the Steering Committee's plans and introduced each of the committee leaders to furnish the group with some ideas for the future.

QCA activities

A QCA Web page has been established. It is still under construction; however, you can view the rough site at <http://www.geocities.com/t6237dg/index.htm>. When a permanent host site is established, we will publish the URL.

Calendar of activities:

- May 17-19, Mini-HEP school at MSU. QCA will meet Friday night.
- Summer 2002, date and location TBA.
- Oct. 18-20, Battle Creek. QCA show Friday night after quartet contest.

QCA show

- Bob Winters provided learning

tapes and music to the members. This is earlier than any QCA chorus preparation in the past.

- The tentative show planned is to be one hour with a focus on quartets. The QCA chorus will learn two new songs per year and rotate repertoire.
- Check out the calendar of rehearsals on the QCA Website.

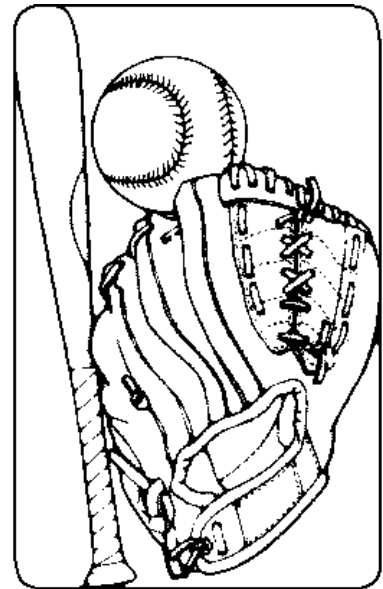
NEWS FLASH:

- Russ Seely (Pioneer QCA President) named Secretary of AH-SOW Organization -- WAY TO GO, PRES!
- The QCA wishes POWER PLAY all the luck in the world as they carry the Pioneer banner into the fray in Portland. Give 'em hell, lads!
- We are also proud of our other competing active district champs, PHILATOGA TOWNSHIP, WJBC, and FOUR MAN FISHIN' TACKLE CHOIR. Great singing, guys!

If you have any comments or suggestions, please send an e-mail to dgore132@comcast.net.

Take me out to the ball game ... in Portland!

The Portland AAA ball team, the Portland Beavers (farm team for San Diego), has a game Tuesday night, July 2. A package price of \$24 includes a one-hour buffet and ticket to the game against the Fresno



Grizzlies. PGE Park is conveniently located on the MAX train route within the "fareless square" area. A Barbershop quartet will sing the National Anthem.

The all-you-can-eat buffet is traditional ballpark fare and includes hot dogs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, baked beans, Frito Lays, Pepsi beverages, and cookies. The buffet runs from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Game time is 7:05 p.m.

For tickets, call Eben Yager, group sales and marketing manager, at 503-553-5427 or e-mail to eyager@pdxpfe.com. Tickets will be held at the Will Call window and will be available starting at 5:30 p.m. (Gates open at 6:00 p.m.).

Music

*For the common things of every day,
God gave us speech in the common way.
And He gave to the poet words to reveal,
The deeper things we think and feel...
But for heights and depths no word
could reach,
God gave us music, the soul's own speech.*

Meredith Willson: 100th anniversary of his birth

Meredith Willson was born in Mason City, Iowa, on May 8, 1902. He grew up there and, after graduating from high school, attended what is now the Julliard School of Music in New York.

During World War II, Willson was the director of Armed Forces Radio, which led him to a successful career as a composer, performer, and director of music programming for many popular shows. He wrote symphonies and many hit songs, including "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas" and "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You."



His most famous works were "The Unsinkable Molly Brown" and "The Music Man," which was inspired by his childhood experiences in Mason City and produced the popular march, "76 Trombones."

The Music Man Square in the heart of Mason City is the future home of the Meredith Willson Museum. The square will contain

a turn-of-the-century "River City" indoor streetscape complete with the Candy Kitchen" and "Pleazol" billiard parlor, a children's exploratorium, a conservatory of music education, a reunion meeting hall, and a theater. A grand opening is planned on the anniversary of his 100th birthday, May 8, 2002.

"Barbershop quartet singing is four guys tasting the holy essence of four individual mechanisms coming into complete agreement."

Meredith Willson

In Memoriam

Art Schulze

Art Schulze, a 60-year member of SPEBSQSA, passed away in March. A member of the Frank Thorne Chapter in recent years, Art was a former member of the old Detroit #1 Chapter and of the Detroit-Oakland Chapter.

He was past historian of the Pioneer District, a past president of Detroit #1 Chapter, and one of the last surviving members of the old DETROIT METROPOLITAN CHORUS.

From Larry King

2002 International Convention Web site

The Greater Portland Vocal Gentry, hosts of the 2002 International Convention, invite you to visit their updated convention Web site: <http://www.vocalgentry.org/portland/>.



You'll find information on:

- Tourism — what to see and do around Portland, Oregon, and southwest Washington
- Convention events — including a preliminary events schedule
- Getting around town on MAX light rail system
- Where to park your camper/RV
- Camping in Oregon
- The West Coast Amtrak Woodshedder's Caboose
- Travel deals for Barbershoppers to Portland
- Post-convention cruise with GAS HOUSE GANG

In Memoriam

Jim Stephens 1931-2002

Jim Stephens was born in Lansing, the oldest of three children of Harper and Ellen Stephens. He grew up there and attended Lansing Eastern High School. In 1949, Jim enrolled at Michigan State University, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in music.

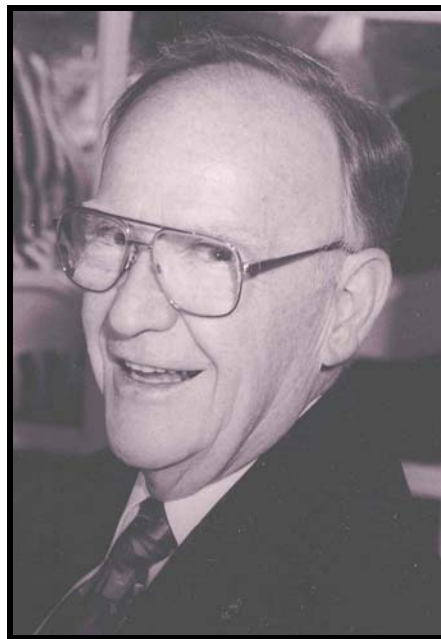
Jim devoted his whole life to music. Like his father and grandfather before him, he was a public school music teacher. He spent 31 years teaching in Southgate, Michigan. During those years, he touched the lives of hundreds of students, many of whom have kept in contact with him. During his teaching tenure, he also directed church choirs, which fulfilled his spiritual needs.

Barbershop harmony was another important part of Jim's musical life. While still in high school, he formed a quartet called the ATMOSPHERES (Jack Frucci was in this quartet). In the 1980s, he sang lead in the SOUND AMBASSADORS. His senior quartets included THE PRESIDENT'S MEN (1991), PRIME TIME (1992), OLD BONES (1993), RARE VINTAGE (1994), VOCAL GENTRY (1995), and CHORDINARY GUYS (2001 in Tucson). He directed the JACKSONAIRES, DETROIT #1, WAYNE RENAISSANCE, and HURON VALLEY HARMONIZERS over his many years in the Detroit area.

In addition, he devoted many hours to arranging music, teaching vocal exercises, providing individual voice lessons, and coaching choruses and quartets. He spent 10 years as music educator for the

Pioneer District as well as backstage chairman and sound technician for district contests.

He was recognized as Barbershopper of the Year at Detroit #1 (1979) and Huron Valley (1976, 1983, 1988, & 1995), and was elected to the Pioneer District Hall of Fame (1991). Jim also received an Outstanding Accomplishment Award in 1979 from Detroit #1 Chapter and a Commendable Service Award in 1991 from Detroit-Oakland Chapter.



In 2001, he was selected Barbershopper of the Year in Tucson, Arizona, where he had resided for the past few years. In addition to serving as vocal coach for the TUCSON SUNSHINE CHORUS, he coached their chapter quartets and continued to share his expertise in sound reinforcement for chapter shows and area performances.

From Paul Ludwig, Tucson Chapter: This diminutive man was indeed a musical giant. I can't begin to tell you how much he helped me to be a better musician. He had a way of instructing that did not embarrass me or injure my pride as a director.

From Greg Humbel: I'll always be thankful for Jim being there for Huron Valley. His talents and soft approach to teaching was unbelievable.

From Jim Ryan: Jim was actually my first contact when I moved to Michigan. He was so warm and friendly that it just seemed natural to come sing for him at Wayne. Jim constantly encouraged me to reach for the higher goal and coached several of the quartets I had the privilege to sing with over the past 10 years. Of all the things I will miss about him, it was that warm smile and genuine love he had for Barbershop.

From Keith Opal: Jim was very dedicated, a marvelous teacher, and a great friend. My most vivid memory came after he had an accident which broke both of his legs. Even though he couldn't stand, he still showed up for rehearsals, sat in a chair, and directed and taught music.

From Dick Reinholt: Jim had a way of bringing out the best in an individual. He helped many a Barbershopper. He had the mental strength of 10 men. He always gave and very seldom ever asked for anything, except that each man do the best he was capable of.

From Lynne Peirce: I remember sitting in the waiting room while my husband, Tom, was undergoing heart bypass surgery. Jim walked in. Tom was not currently active in his chapter and I didn't even know Jim knew about Tom's illness. Jim stayed the entire time, not leaving until Tom's surgery was over and he was out of danger. It was the first time I think I fully understood the power and love of the Barbershop family.

2002 CARA nominees

The Contemporary A Cappella Recording Award nominees have been announced for 2002:

Best Barbershop album:

MILLENNIUM - "Millennium"

CRYSTAL CLEAR - "Lucky Day"

RIPTIDE - "Wonderful Life"

AMBASSADORS OF HARMONY - "Applause"

Best Barbershop song:

PHILHARMONIX - "This Little Piggy Went To Market"

MILLENNIUM - "Jezebel"

AMBASSADORS OF HARMONY - "My Honey's Lovin' Arms"

RIPTIDE - "Fit As A Fiddle/For Me & My Gal" medley.

Tribute to Jim Stephens

A tribute to Jim Stephens will be held on Saturday, June 15, 2002, at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1400 W. Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor, Michigan. The celebration of Jim's life will be from 7:30-10:00 p.m.

Participating throughout the evening will be several Pioneer District and Sweet Adeline quartets. The GENTLEMEN SONGSTERS, the HURON VALLEY HARMONIZERS, and the RENAISSANCE CHORUS will be performing as well.

Refreshments will be provided.

Donations will be accepted to Harmony Foundation. Contact Dick Reinholt at 734-761-2958 or e-mail at RReinholt@comcast.net.

Hi-tech electronic communication

By Pioneer District Secretary
Marvin Skupski

We have now completed our first district convention at which notices and other convention documents were distributed electronically by e-mail and e-mail attachment to all district officers, selected committee chairmen, and chapters. I should say we have "successfully" completed that first district convention using only electronic communication because it went well with only a few minor glitches.

The first "glitch" to be corrected is to have past district presidents included in one of the group mailing lists. Your district secretary neglected (shame on him!) to forward convention documents to those who served us so well in the past. Also to be added are our district historian, our COTS coordinator, and some additional committee chairmen.

Thus far we've received no complaints concerning reception from any of the groups. However, some attached documents only partially printed. I believe the problem may have been the fact that at times eight or 10 documents were attached to one e-mail. I will try to eliminate that problem for the fall convention by spreading the number of attachments over several e-mails when necessary to keep attach-

ments to any one e-mail within a more workable range.

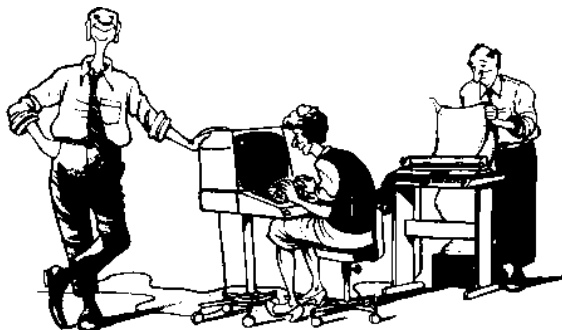
The second "glitch" was that most chapters did not print out the documents and have their delegates bring the documents to the House of Delegates Meeting. Delegates arrived expecting to have documents available for distribution at the meeting. For the fall convention, we will put major emphasis on "print-out-and-bring-with-you."

The third "glitch," and one which the district cannot control, is the fact that some chapter e-mail contact persons apparently

did not communicate to the chapter officers and chapter membership the information that was being sent to them.

These are not private communications for the e-mail contact. The persons who have been designated as the chapter e-mail contact have the responsibility to see that the information the district is communicating does indeed get to the chapter officers and the membership.

A dialog on the PioNet concerning glitches and complaints would be helpful. We need to know what the problems are so we can seek solutions quickly. If you prefer not to respond on the PioNet, e-mail me personally at marvinskup@wwnet.net.



Harmony Heritage Chorus, Power Play win spring contests

(Continued from page 1)

the foursome scored 1,034 points singing "Sunshine of Your Smile" and "Takin' a Chance on Love."

2001 Pioneer District Champion Quartet Philatoga Township finished second with 1,756 points. The foursome — tenor Tom



POWER PLAY: (l to r) Tenor Don Slamka, lead Mike Slamka, bass Jack Slamka, and bari Mark Slamka.

McCoy, lead Larry Reinhart, bari Gary Nitz, and bass Phil Haines — sang "Shanghai," "With a Song in My Heart," "Kiss Her Goodbye for Me," and "Tin Roof Blues."

Finishing third was WJBC — tenor Bruce LaMarte, lead Craig Pollard, bari Brian Kaufman, and bass Doug Morgan — scoring 1,732 points. It sang "Jeepers Creepers," "I'm Alone Because I Love You," "There'll Be No New Tunes on This Old Piano," and "Oh, How I Miss You Tonight." WJBC was district champion in 1999.

BUSH LEAGUE 2002

September 27-29

Triple Play:

1. Great Quartet Contest
2. Quartet Coaching
3. Saturday Night Show of Shows

After 55 years of serving up the Pioneer District a great quartet activity, the Gaylord Chapter has teamed up with the Pioneer District to provide coaching by certified judges to the quartets involved in the weekend. The partnership allowed the use of district grant monies to be used for this event.

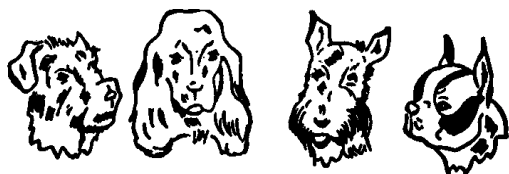
For more information on how to get your team on the bus to this event, contact Hank Hedges at 989-731-1169, or HHedges@i2k.com.

Book your next trip through Harmony Travel

Harmony Travel was created to provide memorable travel experiences for Society members, families, and friends. Current tours include a post Portland convention Alaskan cruise. Call Doug

Thorn at 1-800-876-7464 x-8489 for more specifics.

Also, Harmony Travel works with TravelEx for air transportation needs. Call 1-800-882-0499 and ask for Shelley.



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tineartwo@aol.com

Ever growing ... Or nothing else matters!

Accidental Consonance

(Continued from page 1)

January. Ben explained that Barbershop is only a part of their overall repertoire. While they love the "consonant" sound of the Barbershop style, they also perform vocal jazz, do-wop, and even some classical selections.

Steven Shaw, an instrumental music major heading for a teaching career in music, told about the ArtReach program they participate in. ArtReach is an outreach program for elementary schools in the Mt. Pleasant area.

Contributing to the music part of the program, ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE sings regularly in the schools. They want to mentor male singing, show the kids that singing is fun for big kids, too, and support the music education programs already in place in the schools.

Jeff Malecki, also a music major with an instrumental bent, reminded us of a name familiar to

many old-time Pioneer District Barbershoppers: Dr. David Gillingham, music director at CMU. Dr. Gillingham is ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE's coach and mentor.

No stranger to Barbershopping, he sang with and coached Jamie Carey years ago when Jamie was coming through CMU and beginning the first of his championship-level quartets. ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE's coaching resources would help explain the quality of their performance on Saturday night of the convention!

The young men won a \$1,000 stipend from the Society to defray their expenses

to participate in the College Barbershop Quartet Contest in Portland, Ore., in July, sponsored by MBNA Bank. Based on their singing Saturday night, I am confident they will be proud representatives of our district.

And because they are all juniors, we will certainly hear them again next year!



ACCIDENTAL CONSONANCE: (Left to right) Bari Jeff Malecki, bass Ben Rodgers, lead Nicholas Allen, and tenor Steven Shaw.

My trip to the Big Easy

By John Baker,
Grand Rapids Chapter

Recently I had the pleasure to spend some time with the MARDI GRAS CHORUS. This came about when my company had its annual sales meeting in New Orleans. This meeting was going to take me away from my normal meeting with my quartet, SILHOUETTE, and the GREAT LAKES CHORUS.

My first step was to locate a nearby chapter in New Orleans using the SPEBSQSA home page. I e-mailed the president of the Greater New Orleans Chapter, Mervin Ginsburg. I wrote him that I would be in the area and asked if I would be able to sit in on one of its rehearsals.

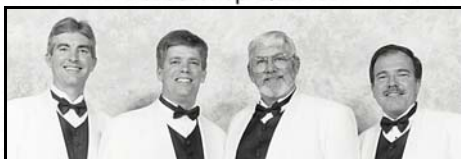
Well, it didn't take long before I got a phone call from Mervin. Not only was I welcomed, he said he would pick me up at my hotel. Two gentlemen pulled up and asked if I was John Baker. Mervin introduced himself and Beryl Laufer, their chapter membership VP.

Mervin showed me some points

(Continued on page 19)

Philatoga Township

Award-Winning
Barbershop Quartet



Contact: Gary Nitz
7498 Dunross Dr.
Portage, MI 49002
Tel: 616-324-0521
E-mail: gaconitz@netzero.net



"Spreading Harmony
and Brotherhood"

Brian Kaufman

Bruce LaMarte



Craig Pollard
248-474-1485

caponyx@entropytech.com

ACAPPELLA
QUARTET

Doug Morgan

My trip to the Big Easy

(Continued from page 18)

of interest as we traveled to Delgado Community College, where they rehearsed.

When we got to their rehearsal hall, I was greeted by several of their members. Mervin introduced me to Mark Vile, their musical director, and gave me a guest book. He then placed me with the basses.

That's where I meet Sherman Platt, Board member and singer with the RAMPART STREET IRREGULARS. Sherman told me that I had picked a good night to come. They were expecting some Sweet Ads and a guest quartet.

We then began rehearsing. Sherman pointed out that the music we were singing came from a member of their chorus, Einar Pedersen.

During the break, Beryl announced to his chapter members that they had two guests visiting that night, but no chance of membership additions — a gentleman from the Louisville THOROUGHBREDS and me.

Then the quartet, HEYDAY, arrived. They were Southwest District 2000 champs and 2001 International semifinalists. What a treat! They did their show package for us.

Chapter member Larry Moran, who lived near my hotel, drove me back. It took me awhile to get to sleep that night.

So, gentlemen, if you're ever in New Orleans, give the MARDI GRAS CHORUS a call.

Or attend any chorus rehearsal when you're out of town. They're as easy as an e-mail away.

And spread the fellowship of harmony. It's a great experience.

The Pioneer District planning process

By Pioneer District President
Al Bonney

A thorough planning process is a key ingredient to our running this business of Barbershop-ping efficiently, effectively, and professionally. It appears lengthy and involved, but if you understand it, you may be better prepared to participate in and use the process. Let me outline how it goes:

1. *The process begins in March* when the Society gathers information for its "planning guidance," a document that outlines the major themes for work that is to be undertaken in the NEXT year. Once completed in May or June, it is circulated to all of the district presidents for consideration in the district planning process.
2. *At the same time*, districts should be communicating with their members' chapters to solicit input for district-level issues that the chapters consider important undertakings.
3. Armed with the above two pieces of information, *the District Leadership Team meets in August* to review and update the five-year plan, write the next year's draft work plan, and draft a budget that will support the work plan.
4. *In October, the Team introduces the draft work plan and budget at the House of Delegates*, seeking its comments

and additions and approval for both the work plan and the budget.

5. *The final step of the process is to intertwine Society-level goals that require district action with district-level goals that have been approved by the HOD.* This happens at the National Leadership Forum in early November in Racine, Wis., where all of the district leadership teams meet with the Society Board and committee chairs, and finalize the plans for every level in the Society. This ensures that everyone's needs are met and all of the bases are covered.
6. *By the end of the year, the final plan is typed and circulated to all interested parties and posted on the district Website.* A reporting schedule is published to ensure that regular status reports circulate throughout the organization. These status reports are provided to all chapter representatives at each House of Delegates in April and October.

I would welcome any suggestions or comments on this process. I especially welcome input into what should be in the plan as well as what you think about how the plan is being implemented. The District Leadership Team exists to serve the district membership, and these plans outline how that mission will be carried out.

"Without music to decorate it, time is just a bunch of boring dates by which bills must be paid."

Frank Zappa

Making its pitch for Barbershop quartets

The following article was written by Dennis McCann and appeared in the February 17, 2002, edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. It is excerpted here with permission.

Kenosha: Hel-lo, HEL-lo, HEL-LO!

Can you tell where I am?

Of chorus you can. I'm at the home of barbershop music in America, and a more harmonious way of getting here would be hard to find.

One moment I was in a barber's chair near my house, which gave me an idea, and so an hour later I was at Harmony Hall in Kenosha, the palatial lakeside headquarters of the world's largest all-male singing society, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, a name only slightly longer than its acronym — SPEBSQSA. Even the society advises against pronouncing SPEBSQSA as a word.

In a world in which teen tarts, randy rappers and country sex kittens sell records by the gazillions, barbershop music flies well under the radar, but the blend of tenor, lead, baritone and bass has been around for more than a century. While like many other organizations it is searching for ways to attract new members to an aging base, the Society still claims nearly 34,000 members in more than 825 chapters in the United States and Canada, with affiliated organizations around the world.

Keeping 40 people busy

And since 1958 the Society's

mother ship has been here in Kenosha, where a staff of more than 40 coordinates competitions, archives sheet music, conducts charitable programs and, not least, runs Harmony College, the annual summer school for 600 barbershoppers who wear red and blue beanies — with propellers — in singing contests.

Beyond that, Harmony Hall is home to the Heritage Hall Museum of Barbershop Harmony, where I learned that Harry Truman was a barbershopper, as was Bing Crosby.

How cool is that?

Uh, remember the beanies? Not very. But Heritage Hall is as much about preservation of the Society's story as the Society is about preserving quartet singing, which brings us to the obvious question. Did it actually begin in the barbershop?

African-American roots

No, though it certainly was sung there in its early days, as it was on street corners, in minstrel shows and other stages. What is known as barbershop singing, according to the society, actually has its roots in African-American music as early as the 1870s, when black quartets such as THE AMERICAN FOUR and THE HAMTOWN STUDENTS helped to establish the improvisational nature of four-part harmony. Such quartets could at times be found singing at such spots as Joe Sarpy's Cut Rate Shaving Parlor in St. Louis, or in Jacksonville, Fla., where one black historian noted "every barbershop seemed to have its own quartet."

Such music especially pros-

pered from the 1890s through the 1920s, in vaudeville, the Chautauqua circuit, and minstrel shows (with both black and white quartets). Interest rose and fell through the years but barbershop music outlasted all of those. SPEBSQSA was formed in 1938 when Tulsa tax attorney O.C. Cash invited a handful of other lovers of harmony to a songfest on the roof garden of the Tulsa Club.

'Perfect' acronym

Cash was said to have a flair for publicity, and the Society's awkward acronym was fodder for writers. With word of mouth and helpful publicity, the Society grew. When competition was introduced in 1939 at the first convention of such quartets, The BARTLESVILLE BARFLIES won the Society's first championship — and \$50.

The museum has artifacts from throughout the years, but I was most interested in a display on the "The Family Schmitt" of Two Rivers, from which came the famous SCHMITT BROTHERS QUARTET. Fran, Joe, Paul, and Jim were four of the 17 children of German immigrants Henry and Anna Schmitt, and were rather new to harmonic singing when they went to the society's 1951 championship in Toledo.

It was 100 degrees and the Schmitt boys were last of 40 groups to sing, so they sat around in their underwear for eight hours, lest their costumes wrinkle in the steamy conditions. And when they did take the stage, they nailed "Hello, Hello, Hello," "I Love the

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Chapters in Action

Windsor

By Bill Strong

The time sure flies when you're having fun, and so this article may seem a little outdated, considering that some of the events took place a while back. First, our annual show, "Barbershop Classics," took place in April and was a huge success. It featured quartets CORNERSTONE, FERMATA NOWHERE, Windsor's own BORDER CROSSING, along with our SUN PARLOUR CHORUS. Many thanks go to Show Chairman Andy McCann and his helpers.

Our district competitors, BORDER CROSSING and the SUN PARLOUR CHORUS, both did well. We did ourselves real proud. Rest assured we'll be back in the fall and hopefully improve upon our scores. Bottom line — we had fun.

Chapterwise, we continue to roll along. One of the more pleasing aspects is not only our numbers but, more importantly, the number of quartets that are trying to get organized within our chapter. Not unusual to get to chapter meetings a little early and hear a couple of quartets practicing in the back room. Keep it up, guys. That's what it's all about. Maybe they'll be on stage some day.

Gaylord

By Hank Hedges

Gaylord Rides into spring in style

Some 25 members of the HARMONIE MEISTERS CHORUS and over 20 friends of Barbershopping boarded a chartered bus and sang into Lansing for the 2002 spring convention. Joined by other members who came earlier, we arrived just in time to fill the back row risers with yellow shirts and have the eminent Steve Sutherland try to teach us the highly complex and powerful dance routines of the JOE BARBERSHOP CHORUS.

The real story of this journey was that this was the first district convention to which over 60 percent of our chapter had attended. What a blast! The contests, the new friends, tag singing, and the up-front view of our fine district organization were true eye openers.

Besides, the district gained at least 14 new expert judges to call on! Seriously, we highly recommend using busing as the way to and from conventions held away from the past southern state locations (like 2004 spring convention and 2002 Bush League in Gaylord). Interested chapter organizers can contact Jim Quin (jdquin@i2k.com).

Muskegon

By Frank Scott

Chorus Manager Tom Porritt has booked our chorus and float for three parades and two summer concerts. The chorus is learning new music for our 62nd annual

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Making its pitch for barbershop quartets (Continued from page 20)

Way You Roll Your Eyes," and "The Sandman" to advance to the next round and, a day later, the championship.

Two thousand fans were said to have greeted them when they returned to Two Rivers (so not everyone was a sibling) and a career was launched. The quartet did 110 performances that year, including "The Ed Sullivan Show" and Arthur Godfrey's radio program. Over the next 35 years, they did 2,857 shows, traveled 2 million miles, and recorded seven albums before Joe died in 1985. The brothers had earlier agreed never to replace a member, so the singing Schmitts

went silent.

Architectural beauty

If you are more a fan of architecture than harmonic singing, Harmony Hall is worth a visit in its own right. It was originally the mansion home of Walter H. Alford, an early automotive industry titan. Not bad for a house the Society acquired for back taxes of \$75,000.

You might say — at least I will — they got it for a song.

Harmony Hall is open free to the public year 'round, Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, call (262) 653-8440 or visit www.spebsqsa.org.

Chapters in Action

(Continued from page 21)

show in September. Featured quartets will be WJBC and the PATCH CHORDS.

John Tyler, VP of chapter development, has obtained a date for the chapter to sponsor a "Party in the Park" for August 16. These parties take place in Hackley Park in downtown Muskegon on most Friday evenings during the summer.

We're inviting all members of neighboring chapters to attend and enjoy this event. Call John at 231-755-3088 for more information.

Detroit-Oakland

By Tom Uicker

First of all, let me invite you to the "Return of the Jug" Night on Friday, June 7. The party will be held at Sacred Heart Byzantine Catholic Church hall, 29123 W. 6 Mile Road in Livonia, Mich. The doors open at 7:00 p.m., with the food served at 8:00. We expect POWER PLAY to be there as well as many other quartets and choruses.

Second, we appreciate all the thanks and well-wishes resulting from our recent hosting of the district spring convention. We discovered the void in hosting chapters at the same time we won the district chorus championship. We were glad to be able to step up and lend our experience in filling this void.

It was also nice to attend a district convention without the stress of competition. We had four or five members who had not been to a convention previously. For them and their spouses to get involved with so many other chapter members working toward a common goal brings a spirit that is hard to attain in other activities of the chapter.

We wish all the best for Kalamazoo, hosting this fall, and Huron Valley, hosting next spring. And for other chapters that haven't taken the opportunity to host a district convention, we would encourage you to seriously look at doing so in the future.

Third, we will be performing at the Nardin Park Concert Series on Wednesday, July 17, in Farmington Hills. And we will have a whole new show ready for next February. We are going with local talent next

year as we bring together POWER PLAY and FOUR MAN FISHIN' TACKLE CHOIR.

Finally, it saddens me to report that, for the first time since its inception in 1990, we don't have a recipient of the Bill Butler Quartet Coaching Scholarship Fund this year. This fund was created in 1990 to support quartets and quartet coaches with scholarships at Harmony Round-Up. We had been able to send at least one district quartet or quartet coach to our district mini-HEP every year from 1990 through 2001. Currently, we have \$100 in the fund. So we are soliciting contributions in hopes of reviving this scholarship next year.

Flint

By Guy Hissong

Hello, fellow chord ringers. The ARROWHEAD CHORUS once again had a great time at the wonderful spring convention. It's always nice to see so many fellow Barbershoppers and hear them sing.

Jim Massey is giving us some excellent tips and coaching on woodshedding. This will definitely get some of those guys interested who thought they couldn't do it.

We are presently gearing up for our show that will be held on June 1, "Happy Daze." Show times are 2:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at Grand Blanc High School. See our Web site at <http://community.mlive.com/cc/flintbarbershop> for a map to the auditorium. Special guest quartets will be CROSSFIRE and the lovely Sweet Adeline's TALK OF THE TOWN. We hope to see you there.

Monroe North

By Chris Berry

Since the beginning of the year, much has happened — some good and some not. Our membership was on the decline, we cancelled our show, we got a new director, and we brought in a new board of directors. All of this would ordinarily be cause for alarm, but the chapter members have pulled together to put the chapter back on its feet and move forward.

As a chapter, we've set two goals for ourselves this year. The first is to reach a membership goal of 25 by the end of the year, and the second is to have at least 12 performances this year.

Easy goals you would think, but not so with 13 members at the time the goals were set. Since Janu-

ary, we've raised our membership to 18 and will have had five performances by the end of May! We are setting up a dinner show for September and are in the process of creating a committee for next year's show.

We're coming back strong and invite anyone interested in singing with us to stop on down.

Pontiac-Waterford

By John Cowlshaw

Our BIG CHIEF CHORUS sang to a 9th-place finish at the district spring convention. We scored 667 points singing "Let's Get Away From It All" and "If I Had the Last Dream Left in the World." It was not quite what we'd hoped for, given the growth (to 61 members, putting 44 on stage) and improvement we've experienced in recent months. But it's always exciting to be out on the stage.

We've benefited from the coaching of Linda Lidicoatt (half-funded by a Michigan Council of the Arts mini-grant) and from the Pioneer District Chorus Coaching Clinic on the Michigan State University campus March 2, of which 35 of our guys attended despite the snow.

Our senior quartet, SUNNYSIDE, sang in two school programs in the Florida Keys that raised nearly \$2,000 for the schools, one in Sugar Loaf Key and the other in Marathon Key. They also spent Friday, April 12, at Clarkston Elementary School as part of Festival USA. Lyle Howard joined Dick Johnson, Roger Holm, and Smitty Smith to conduct classes in Barbershop harmony for the kids (kindergarten through fifth grade). Dick brought a large collage of BBS memorabilia. What a wonderful educational experience for the kids! And Dick says it was "superfine, super-satisfying!" for the quartet.

Five chapters attended this year's woodshed contest, and Bill Pascher awarded the Bennington Trophy for best chapter attendance and participation to Grosse Pointe. The SILVER DOMES (John Wearing, Russ Seely, John Wade, and Gene Bulka) were the judges at Pontiac-Waterford's 46th Annual Woodshed Contest. They judged the singing of 18 quartets (72 singers) and their ability to join together in harmony.

THE FOUR HOOTS — lead Frank Fortier (Grosse Pointe), tenor Fred McFadyen (Macomb), bari Mike Profitt (Grosse Pointe), and bass Bob Wisdom (Motor City Metro) won the contest.

Another evening highlight was the presentation by Chris Miller of the Pontiac-Waterford Honorary "Big Chief" trophy to Russ Seely for Russ's many contributions to our singing society.

Grosse Pointe

By Nick Piccione

The Grosse Pointe Chapter keeps moving up the ladder at district competition. At Lansing this spring, our LAKESHORE CHORUS captured a very respectable third place ... only five points out of second ... Wow!

Russ Seely worked his magic by wringing out every last drop of emotion and quality sound from his "meatheads" as he directed "I've Found My Sweetheart, Sally." Steve Pauling directed his very special rendition of "Get Out and Get Under the Moon." Amazingly, they scored almost identical total points.

Thanks, Russ and Steve, for giving us that most wonderful gift of making us proud of ourselves.

Our chapter newsletter, the *Pitch Pipe*, has become so exceptional in substance, readability, layout, reproduction, and general overall quality that it has been recognized by the Pioneer District as an award winner. Therefore, the Grosse Pointe spotlight falls on our inimitable and talented *Pitch Pipe* editor, Bob Rancilio. Rather than go on about Bob's many abilities, I'd just like to say:

*Any writer of particular note,
Is remembered by the things that he wrote.
Bringing news to the guys is his mission,
Although quite hard to fill all those pages,
Bobby does it for love, not for wages.
We can't wait to see each new edition!*

Harmony College is a solid week of solid Barbershop

Harmony College is one of the great experiences of membership in the Society. It's held each year at Missouri Western State College in St. Joseph, Mo. Dates this year are July 28 to August 4. (See the ad on the back cover of the March/April issue of *The Harmonizer*.)

For more information or to register, call 800-876-7464 x-8551, or on-line at hcdc@spebsqsa.org.

... New edit #10

Last week when I went to my bank, I asked the teller to check my balance. She leaned over and pushed me!

Never fry bacon in the nude!

It doesn't matter what temperature the room is; it's always room temperature.

Marriage is the process of finding out what kind of man your wife would have preferred.

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Upcoming Events

2002

May 10 - Holland Show.

May 11 - Macomb Show.

May 17-19 - Harmony Round-Up at MSU. Contact Dan Bezaire: DBezaire@wincom.net.

May 19 - Hillsdale Show.

June 1-2 - Flint Show.

June 7 - Return of the Jug Night. Contact Tom Uicker: 248-559-7082.

June 7-8 - Traverse City Show.

June 14 - Windsor Send-Off. Contact Doran McTaggart: 519-948-0637.

June 15 - Jim Stephens Tribute. See page 15.

June 30-July 7 - International Convention, Portland, Ore.

July 28-Aug. 4 - Harmony College, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, Mo.

Sept. 14 - Huron Valley Show.

Sept. 27-28 - Gaylord Bush League. Contact Hank Hedges: 517-731-1169.

Sept. 28 - Muskegon Show.

Oct. 18-20 - Pioneer District Convention & Competition, Battle Creek, Mich.

Note: All chapter show activities must be cleared through Pioneer District Secretary Marvin Skupski (contact information on page 2).



*michigan council for
arts and cultural affairs*



BILL

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