



**BIG CHIEF CHORUS**

# **SMOKE SIGNALS**



**Pontiac/Waterford Chapter**  
Meetings on Tuesdays: 7:30 to 10 PM

Bulletin #23, March 18, 2003

Bring your music, your pipes, and your long-johns, as the temp takes another nose-dive as we gather at Ralph MacMullan Center on Higgins Lake for our **Singing Retreat 2003** with Dr. Jeff Taylor, Choral Music Director of the Unionville School of the Arts in Toronto.

## **AROUND THE PATCH**

Thanks to Wayne Cheyne and Gene Downie for managing this year's **Valentine's Day Singouts**, to Waterford Hill Florist & Greenhouse for donating flowers, and to B NATURAL, FOUR WHEEL DRIVE, HARMONY KNIGHTS, and a reconstituted HARMONY WAY (Norm Hunt – Tenor, Bruce Brede – Lead, Neil Braun – Bari, and Chuck Murray – Bass) for singing.

HARMONY WAY filed these reports. Brede: "Singouts went well...both Chuck Murray and Neil Braun were a little tough to rein in...they didn't realize I had commitments to the customers in terms of time and content... But we did 7 straight \$40-gigs plus a 10-song walkaround at Lion's Den for our dinner as well as over 50 songs at three different times (including the lobby for customers waiting to be seated and a wedding party where a 75 year old Sweet Adeline sang with us...A good day of 110 miles stretching from Metamora to Southfield. No guns, no drugs...just appreciative people. Bruce." Murray: "Wow! What fun we had doing twelve hours of Singing Valentines yesterday! The chapter coffers should grow significantly this year as a result of the efforts of all those

men who volunteered their time and talents to sing Valentines. This means we can do lots more things, like take Mystery Bus Trips, have Fall Planning Retreats, Spring Singing Retreats, etc., which cost money. I have to share the "great reward" afforded the quartet I was singing with. The gal we were singing to looked up at us *with a tear in her eye*, and thanked us sincerely for singing to her. That made my day! (The world's most powerful fluid drive is a woman's tear!) I also had the privilege of singing with our new tenor, Norm Hunt. Norm did a super job of improvising the background for Bruce Brede's "Kitty". (I think we only did "Kitty" about 28 times, this year!) I look forward to next year, and many more guys creating new quartets to do Singing Valentines. Lot's of fun and fellowship. Here's to improved singing, chordially, Chuck Murray"

Harmony Knights got this letter from Crittendon Hospital: "Dear Tom, Tom, Ross and Jeff, It was a delightful surprise when I turned around and saw you all walk into the Rehab unit with your black tuxedo and red bowties. Not only did you look good, but you could sing too! Thank you for taking time out of your long and busy day to share your smiles and songs with our patients and staff. The special live music made a regular day at the hospital much more enjoyable, especially for the ladies. We really appreciated the generosity of the "Harmony Knights". Please keep us in mind for the future ..... Do you know any Irish tune?"

Since **Bill Auquier's** job moved to the afternoon shift, he has been unable to attend Tuesday rehearsals. Dick Johnson has been filling in for Bill as **Uniform Manager**. Last night **Ron Clarke** agreed to serve as Uniform Manager, thereby freeing Dick up from one less responsibility.

**FOUR WHEEL DRIVE** sang Sunday, March 9, at Zaven and Al's Free Methodist Church of Clarkston.

**Smitty writes from Florida:** "Hi Just Thought I'd Let The Chapter Know That I'm Still Barbershopping. At this point in time I am getting ready for a series of shows, Tenor with Naples, Bari with Cape Coral, and Tenor in Music Man. I have a 450 mi round trip every Wed for practice with the cast of Music Man and Rehearsal of one kind or another all the rest of the days of the week. Then shows on the weekend, Barbershop demos at the schools during the day, and B-natural is coming for a few days and we have several singouts and a show to do while they are here. I had to drop the mixed chorus this year (didn't have time this year 'Need more days in the week) Sorry I will miss the retreat, but I'm doin' Music Man that weekend. Running into a lot of Barbershoppers from the PIO District. I have to go as I have about 20 new songs to finish up, and a couple of quartets to shine up for tha shows, Singcerely JES."

John **Cowlshaw** was proud to have **son Phil** in town for a week performing with ArtsPower out of New York. The cast of four gave 14 performances of "The

Little Engine that Could” at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts and the Southfield Millenium Center. The whole tour includes 200 performances to schoolkids across the nation.

Bill Pascher shared the April, **1982** bulletin (**Pontiac Pow Wow**) with me. Lead story was that Milford won the Bennington Trophy for best attendance at the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Pontiac Woodshed Contest. Winning quartet included John Smith at Tenor, Kevin Hayes at Lead, Dick Liddicoat at Bari, and Nels Gregersen at Bass. And the guest quartet was FOUR WHEEL DRIVE of the Oakland County chapter.

The **Oakland Press**, issue of Thursday, Jan 23, 2003, included a **picture of Bill Pascher receiving the Founder’s Award** from the chapter.

About a dozen BCC members are in various stages of downloading **Finale NotePad** for use in chorus communications.

**Membership:** 63

**New Members:** Bruce Collins, Fred DeVries, Gayle Mohler, Greg Moss

**Renewals:** Wayne Cheyne (2), Doug Corliss (2), Al Monroe (3), John Cowlshaw (4), Bob Legato (4), Bill Holmes (5), Gene Downie (6), Chuck Murray (8), Bob Marshall (13), Dan Valko (14), Mike Frye (15), Stan Mersino (19), Howard Lynn (27),

**Birthdays: March:** Fred DeVries (18<sup>th</sup>), Bruce LaMarte (18<sup>th</sup>), Dan Valko (19<sup>th</sup>), Tom Blackstone (22<sup>nd</sup>), Donald Carrier (23<sup>rd</sup>), Bill Holmes (25<sup>th</sup>)

**April:** Gayle Mohler (2<sup>nd</sup>), Dan Atkinson (10<sup>th</sup>),

**Barbershopper of the Month** – February – Gene Downie. Finally we can reward Gene for all of his work as President!

**From Prez Pete:**

Feb 25 was **Pizza Night** at the Over Tyme Bar and Grille. “...a great success. 35 men were in, and we had a wonderful time of fun, fellowship, and good singing. Bruce Collins and Len Barnes directed us in singing several Pole Cats (but not Pole Kitties). Two of Sunnyside's eggs were in Florida; Four Wheel Drive was running on two wheels; Harmonic Progression's Bari was in Florida; Best in Show's Show was in Florida; but Harmony Knights (with a spare) did some quartet singing. Several other pick-up quartets sang in harmony and we rang some chords (even Doc heard the over tones). The service and pizza were great, and of course we sang to our waitress Holly. A Big Thank you goes to Walt DeNio for making all the arrangements. Bill Pascher must have had one too many, as he was seen leaving the Bar using a cane. We need to do this more often!

**Congratulations and Thank You to:**

1. Our Valentine Singing Quartets and organizers, Gene Downie and Wayne

Cheyne. The sing outs netted \$1382.12 for the BCC.

2. Wayne Cheyne for BSOM for March.

3. Our membership VP Doc Mann for his enthusiasm. He is asking all members to wear their name tags at all rehearsals.

4. Dick Johnson and Bruce Collins for their help with Chorus direction.

5. Bill Holmes for keeping up with the tremendous demands of Music Librarian.

6. Yong McDowell for constructing a great web site - [www.pontiacchapter.com](http://www.pontiacchapter.com) (Check it out!)

7. John Cowlshaw for 'Smoke Signals', producing the parody music, and getting us on-line to download music.

8. Dick Johnson and Len Barnes for the Woodshed Contest.

9. Bill Nevaux for managing our weekly attendance.

Several people have asked what the **budget** is for this or that. The Executive Board is asking that any specific requests for funding be submitted to our Secretary, Dick Johnson, and we will decide the expenditure of funds. Anyone with a clear objective for **Grant money**, should contact Dick Johnson. Dick also is chairing the **Venue (Rehearsal) Search** Committee and is seeking any tips or suggestions.

Help!! We need you to step up and **chair one of the following 6 areas:** Historian; Quartet Activities; Tags; Pole Cats; Annual BCC Picnic; and Valentines. If you are interested, please let Pete know.

Procedure Change: **Anyone who wishes to speak** to the chorus at our business meetings, must clear their interest with Pete PRIOR to the meeting.

In our continuous effort to **improve chorus rehearsals** we are asking:

1. that all members learn the words and 'be off the paper' after three rehearsals.
2. Eliminate talking and side comments during instructional time.
3. Bring and use your tape recorders.

**From Doc Mann**, VP of membership and development:

“PONTIAC/WATERFORD CHAPTER TO BE HEARD FROM IN THE DISTRICT. Not only are we going to be heard from on stage and in the upgraded quality and level of our singing but in the growth and development of one of the most exciting, enthusiastic, fun and fastest growing chapters in the district. And how are we getting there, you ask??? Desire, Pride, Spirit and a variety of learning techniques and activities to make it a well-rounded, well-balanced chapter. From the dedication of the Board, our Director, and the chorus members. One Mann Can't Do It All But All Men Together Can Do Something To Make It Happen!!!!!! Next meeting bring a friend... Let him share in the growth of a new era for this Chorus.

## AROUND THE DISTRICT

BBC members who participated in the Feb 15 **D.O.C. Valentines' show** included: Yong McDowell, Zaven Melkonian, Wally Plosky, Jeff Spires, Marv Wilson, and FOUR WHEEL DRIVE.

If you haven't yet heard **POWER PLAY**, another chance would be June 28, at the **Great Lakes Chorus Sweet Adeline show** – 3:30 and 7:30 at Troy High School.

Dave Anderson, Pioneer VP-YMIH writes: "The third annual A CAPPELLA BLAST! will again be held at MSU on May 16-18, the same weekend as Harmony Round-up. The cost per person [of] \$40... is due to a \$5000 grant from Harmony Foundation and also the MACACA Grant from the State of Michigan that frees up other funds in the District that can help out this project.

Gerry Milkie reported on the Pionet about this early reference to **barbershop**: "Sheet music naturally appeals to musicians. Its popularity began around 1880 after the piano became a fixture in most middle-class homes at the end of the Civil War. In those days, friends and family would gather around the piano in the parlor to sing the latest songs from sheet music, and barbershop quartets arose out of this pastime."

### Cool and Crazy

Dateline: Pontiac, Feb 17. I missed Disney's new production of **Music Man** last night on TV, with Matthew Broderick and the V.I.P. quartet replacing Robert Preston and the Buffalo Bills. PIONET was full of sour reviews this morning. Well, I was engrossed in "**Cool & Crazy**," a 2001 documentary on the Sundance Channel. It surely got better reviews than Pionetters gave to Music Man. And it's about **male a capella singing**. If you get a chance, see this picture ... "likened to a Nordic BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB, Knut Erik Jensen's offbeat and entertaining documentary traces the fortunes of the Berlevag Male Choir, a 30-man ensemble hailing from a forlorn fishing village on the Barents Sea, formerly best known as the setting for Isak Dinesen's story "Babette's Feast." Composed of the craggy descendants of Viking ancestors with an average age of about 70, the Berlevag Male Choir emerges in this portrait as a moving study of human resilience against a declining local economy, an exodus of marriageable women and arctic weather both bleak and harsh. Jensen focuses on individual members of the ensemble - including its wheelchair-bound conductor, a dyslexic fisherman and their agnostic organist - as they rehearse traditional ballads and hymns in preparation for a rare live concert in Murmansk, Russia. This unusual audience pleaser won the Gold Hugo for Best Documentary at the 2001 Chicago International Film Festival."

Edith Diggory was one of two recipients of the 2002 Teaching Excellence Award at Oakland University, in response to which she wrote an article entitled "**Coaxing the Students to Find Their Voices**," from which the following is excerpted:

"When one starts studying voice, one embarks on an adventure of self-awareness and self-understanding that is truly unique. I can think of no other discipline that requires such intimate self-knowledge and trust. Learning how to sing well involves understanding how the instrument works, a difficult task because it is internal; learning how the mind works – figuring out both how we learn and how we learn obstacles for ourselves; learning about and developing empathy for the human condition. People and their life situations are what we sing about. If we are going to connect emotionally with people when we sing, we have to connect emotionally with them in life... To many students, learning how to sing is a very scary proposition because they have managed to get by in life without really tapping into or exposing to view their inner selves. When you sing in front of people, you bare your soul. A very risky business.

"First of all, a student must learn how their vocal instrument actually works. It's quite simple really. Air moves up from the lungs and sets the vocal folds (also known as the vocal chords) into vibration. This causes pitched sound. Most of the rest of learning how to make good sound is learning how to get out of the way of this air/sound flow. This involves making the optimum amount of space in order to maximize the resonance potential of your body.

"It is during this learning process that I find the most fundamental and profound changes in the students' approach to learning occur. Since the instrument, the voice, is internal the student must develop a keen awareness of what he/she is feeling and doing inside his/her own body. Very little about the voice is visible – only some symptoms. Developing this internal awareness is extremely difficult.

"The second most significant shift in students' thinking occurs with the understanding that **making** the voice happen is counter-productive, **letting** it happen is the way to go... Most students are astounded at the sound that comes out of them as they learn to let go. Many are unsettled... a little bit like finding out that you were adopted.

[Then] we have all the interpretive issues to deal with. Each time a singer sings a song, he/she re-creates a world – specifics of time, culture, gender, and personal circumstances."

### TREATING YOUR VOICE WELL, Part III

Many vocal problems arise from misuse and overuse of the voice. But not all of them. Other causes are infectious and inflammatory conditions, benign and malignant growths, psychogenic conditions, and neuromuscular diseases. An example of the latter is spasmodic dysphonia, a condition that draws 8% of the patients to Wake Forest University's Center for Voice Disorders. Many of us

know Al Fisk, a member of the Macomb County Chapter, and past quartetter and coach, who is now partially sidelined by spasmodic dysphonia. I interviewed Al: "How did the symptoms first appear? and when?"

MAYBE 15 YEARS AGO, I NOTICED THAT I WASN'T HITTING THE HIGH NOTES WITH THE SAME QUALITY. I ATTRIBUTED IT TO OVERUSE (TEACHING/SINGING) AND ADJUSTED. IN 1999, THIS PROBLEM ACCELERATED TO THE POINT THAT I QUIT THAT QUARTET. I FELT THAT MY SINGING WAS SO STRAINED THAT I WAS HURTING THE QUARTET QUALITY. (THE DETROIT SOUND COMPANY WON PIONEER IN 1998.)

Looking back, do you think there was there anything about your singing style that "caused" them?"

NOBODY KNOWS. SOME DOCTORS THINK I DEVELOPED SOME BAD SUPPORT HABITS. OTHERS SAY THAT THIS LATEST DIAGNOSIS OF SPASMODIC DYSPHONIA SIMPLY OCCURS AS FATE.

What was the initial diagnosis? Is that the present diagnosis too?

SINCE 1999, I HAVE SEEN 15 DOCTORS, BEEN TO FOUR HOSPITALS, AND VISITED THREE STATES. ALONG THE WAY, I'VE TRIED SPEECH THERAPY, CHANGE OF DIET, ACID REFLUX MEDICATION, MASSAGE, REST, VOICE LESSONS, AND BOTOX INJECTIONS. I'VE HAD CAMERAS DOWN MY NOSE TO SEE MY VOCAL FOLDS. I HAD AN ENDOSCOPY (CAMERA DOWN MY THROAT) TO LOOK FOR DAMAGE IN MY ESOPHAGUS. I STILL HAVE MY CONDITION AND HAVE GIVEN UP ON DOCTORS. MY FAITH IN GOD WILL CURE ME, ALTHOUGH IT HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

How much agreement or disagreement is there in the medical community about your condition?

NOT MUCH, REALLY. WE SIMPLY KEEP RULING OUT POSSIBILITIES. MY CHICAGO BOTOX DOCTOR WANTS TO TRY MORE INJECTIONS OF VARIOUS DOSAGES IN DIFFERENT PLACES, BUT I FOUND NO RELIEF WITH HIS FIRST INJECTION. THAT ONE HAD A HUGE DOSAGE OF BOTOX, WAS INJECTED IN THE PROPER SPOT, AND YET MY VOICE CAME BACK (STILL STRAINED) IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. EVIDENTLY, I'M ONE OF THOSE WHO DOESN'T RESPOND TO THE TREATMENT.

When you see new singers, is there anything they're doing that makes you say, "ouch" that could lead to similar problems?

NO. I DON'T BELIEVE THAT MISUSE HAS CAUSED MY TROUBLES. I HAVE A "TRAINED" VOICE AND HAD NO PROBLEMS FOR YEARS. AGAIN, SPASMODIC DYSPHONIA IS NOT BROUGHT ON BY MISUSE. IT JUST "HAPPENS". I BELIEVE THAT I DO HAVE SD BUT

DID NOT RESPOND TO THE THREE INJECTIONS. I WAS WARNED THAT IT DIDN'T WORK FOR EVERYONE.

Hope that helps, John. Peace."

### Calendar

Mar 18	Rehearsal
Mar 21-3	Singing Retreat, Higgins Lk
Mar 25	Rehearsal
Mar 28, 7:30	Woodshed contest, PTK Country Club
Apr 1	Rehearsal, Linda coach
Apr 8	Rehearsal
Apr 10	Exec Bd, 7:30, Gene Downie's
Apr 11	SPEBSQSA Birthday, Founded 1938
Apr 15	Rehearsal, Linda coach & family night
Apr 17	Big Chief Chorus Birthday, Founded 1943
Apr 22	Rehearsal, elsewhere
April 25-27	District Convention – Lansing
May 16-17	Harmony Round-up, Mich. St. Univ.
Jun 29 – July 6	International Convention, Montreal

---

### Chapter Executive Board

#### Officers

Chorus Director: Chris Miller ((248-960-5101)  
President: Pete Mazzara (313-563-4026)  
VP, Chapter Development: Doc Mann  
VP, Music and Performance: John Smith  
Secretary: Jeff Doig  
Treasurer: Dick Johnson  
Members at Large: Chuck Murray, Zaven Melkonian

#### Chairmen

Quartet Activity: Len Barnes  
Service (Charity): Bruce Brede  
Singing Valentine: Bob Marshall  
Chorus Manager: Art Carinci  
Music Librarian: Bill Holmes  
Uniform Manager: Bill Auquier  
Sunshine (Chaplain): Bill Dabbs  
Bulletin Editor: John Cowlshaw

### **Grin and bear it:**

"When I die, I want to die like my grandmother who died peacefully in her sleep. Not screaming like all the passengers in her car."