

Vol. 5, No. 12, (#60)

April 1, 2006

4th Annual Spring Singing Retreat, Higgins Lake

Thirty-three chorus members gathered at DNR's Ralph MacMullan Retreat Center on the north shore of Higgins Lake, Friday, March 24 thru Sunday morning – to sing, eat well, bond, and be coached by Gene Hanover, Director of the Michigan Metro Lighthouse Chorus, Instructor of Applied Voice at Southwest Michigan College and in his private studio in Bridgman, MI., and Lead in the new quartet AFTER INTERMISSION.

Program planning by Pete Mazzara was expert. Friday began with ad hoc singing, warmups and tags, and a first presentation of our contest songs "Aint Misbehavin'" and "Sweet, Sweet Roses of Morn." Saturday morning, Bruce Brede led the energetic ones on a health walk to the lake shore, where we viewed tree-trimming by a non-Michigan (why?) company and ice fishing shanties in the dim light of the lake. The nine (count 'em, nine!) newcomers to Spring Retreat, wearing feathers, were roasted and toasted. More warm ups and sectionals and working on the songs. Greg Moss and Bruce Brede presented "Being Ready." After lunch Gene led more coaching both of the chorus and of chapter quartets. There was competition between pickup quartets, and, after dinner, woodshed competition, and Gene's Craft session on Music as a judging category, before breaking out the drinks and snacks. Friday and Saturday mealtimes included

singing for the other MacMullan guests. By Sunday, we were alone, and also pretty tired from the intensity of the weekend. After a review of our songs, we headed home.



Photos by Dave Myre

Some specific memories:

- Neil Braun's solo on "Shine on Harvest Moon"
- Singing for the participants in CMU's Relationship Seminar
- Gene's spending significant time on coaching our director, simplifying body and hand signals, having Dick listen instead of sing, and asking the chorus to mirror the director
- Gene's view that warmups must include both individual work to warm up the vocal apparatus and group work to warm up the "ear."
- Greg's leading us in Speech-Level Singing, including hums and nyah's
- John's introduction of the "whining ogre."
- Bill Holmes' stand-up comedy, and his 77th birthday song
- Singing to Doc Mann and Ross Ensign over the phone
- Howard Lynn's videos from the 2003 Retreat with coach Jeff Taylor, the 2004 Retreat with Don Bazely, and the 2005 mini-Retreat with Gene Hanover
- NCAA finals and Red Wings hockey in the background

- So many women who just happened to be named Mary Lou or Caroline
- Learning a new tag, “Down in the City of Tears”
- Gene surprising us by asking for more volume in many sections of chorus and quartet songs
- Newcomers in Ontario Lodge, Oldtimers in Straits.
- Learning to unlock shared bathroom doors
- Hearing our newest members (Gil, Dave S., Bob, Dar, Terry, Tom, Dave M., Dale) singing so well in their first quartet competitions
- ROSCOMMON winning the competition

Thanks to:

The Retreat Committee, Pete Mazzara, Dick Johnson, Jack Teuber, and Bruce Brede

Dick Johnson, for Directing, Woodshedding, and Tag singing

Dave Myre for Photos, also Howard Lynn, Bill Dabbs, and Neil Braun

Art Ripley and Roger Holm for lugging Risers

Ted Prueter for Music and Set up

Jeff Doig for Sound Recorder

Howard Lynn for Bar Set up

Jack Teuber and Dave Myre for Snacks

John and Greg for Warmups and Exercises

Bruce for the Health Walk

Bruce and Zaven for organizing Quartet Activities

Dick for Woodshedding

Section leaders for Sectionals (Roger, Greg, Bruce, Jeff, Dave S, John, and Mike)

Dick, Roger, and Bill for Leading Mealtime Songs

Greg and Bruce for presenting “Being Ready”

Bill Holmes for Jokes

Art Carinci for being a stern Agenda Time-keeper

And, especially, Gene Hanover for his generous Vocal Leadership

At Tuesday’s rehearsal, we summarized what we learned:

Stand balanced, soft knees, upright to free chest, taking full breaths

Head tilted level to down, rather than up

Watching the director

Relax the throat under the chin

Owning the two square feet of riser space

Quiet inbreath

Avoiding gang-singing

Better synchronization on “Sweet, Sweet Roses...”

Hands cupping ears to hear self

Techniques for lightening up the high notes, in head, not chest voice
 Taking a tonic chord well, before beginning song
 Starting a word or phrase a little softer and building it.
 Shaping the mouth on the in-breath

From Roger Holm for the Music Committee.

We have just four more Tuesday night chapter meetings in which to "polish" our contest songs! It behooves us all to be present at those four meetings so we can put our best foot forward on April 29th in Kalamazoo!

ALSO! We have two events coming up this week - a sing-out in Rochester on Thursday afternoon, followed by stopping by the nursing home in Lake Orion, where Doc Mann is recuperating from serious hip surgery, to sing for him and I'm sure other folks there! Doc's a pretty special member of our chorus, and our stopping-by will surely brighten his day while he struggles with surgery recovery and its complications.

AND The WOODSHED CONTEST Friday night at the Pontiac Country Club! This is a lot of fun, and since we're the host chapter, we'd sure like to have a large chorus presence there! Who knows - you might even win a prestigious winners badge!

AROUND THE PATCH

MEMBERSHIP (at 64)

Barbershoppers of the Month

January: Gene Downie. for significant work on the Juke Box as well as the Directory he prepares each year make him a well deserving person to receive this honor.

February: John Cowlshaw and Greg Moss for their effective assistance in improving and enhancing our singing through “warm-ups.”

March: Lyle Howard for his assistant directorship, introducing our new songs as lead in B NATURAL, and assisting the lead section.

Renewals: Dave Shantz (2), Fred DeVries (4), Greg Moss (4), Wayne Chene (5), Al Monroe (6), Art Carinci (7), John Cowlshaw (7), Bob Legato (7), Jim Owens (7), Bill Holmes (8), Gene Downie (9), Chuck Murray (11), Jeff Doig (14), Bob Marshall (16), Dan Valko (17), Mike Frye (19), Tom Blackstone (20), Mel Parrish (21), Stan Mersino (22), Howard Lynn (30)

Pending: Walt Bachman, Bert Cederleaf, Bruce Collins, Doug Corliss, Graham Frye, Roger Holm, Gayle Mohler, Jeff Spires

April Birthdays: Gayle Mohler (2nd), Tom Newman (5th), Jeff Spires (16th), Doug Corliss (17th), Wayne Cheyne (25th)

Medical: Doc Mann had his hip replacement surgery, and is recuperating for several weeks at Lake Orion Nursing Center, 585 E. Flint St, Lake Orion, MI. Ross Ensign had cardiac exploration and coronary stents.

Subsequently he hurt his back badly enough to delay his return to chorus.

Jeff Doig is now the fully empowered **webmaster** of the chorus website. Check out the additions he's made, but check it out at www.bigchiefchorus.org, not www.pontiacchapter.com anymore.

Dick reminds us that **feedback**, negative or positive, from the risers doesn't work. Communicate with him privately.

Gene Hanover had praise for our participation at the retreat. As a follow up, if enough individuals are interested he would arrange to give private voice lessons. This might be especially helpful to the new guys.

About seventeen members of the BCC performed March 28 for the challenged students at **Lahser Pre-Vocational Training Center**.

The **Big Chief Chicks** will meet at Fino's for breakfast, Thursday morning, April 13, at 9:30 a.m. Fino's is on Dixie Hwy, north of Williams Lake Road across from the K-Mart.

Holly Show Follow-up (from Greg Moss)

There are two pieces of news from Sherman Middle School, which was the sponsor of our show at the Holly High School. One is a result of the Chapter board deciding to send our performance fee back to the school. No one at the school can remember ever having a vendor (that's us) do that before.

The second is that the Sherman Middle School 8th grade choir, with Dorothy Duensing as their director, took a Division I overall rating at the Michigan Schools Vocal Music Association's District Choir Festival in Flint. This is a first for them, and this allows them to be in the State Choir Festival in May. (Dorothy was the "champion" for us to perform in Holly.)

Al **Monroe's** granddaughter, Chloe Ryan Phillips, and John **Cowlishaw's** grandtwins, Ryan and Brendan, were all born on March 2.

Quartet and Ensemble News

On Saturday eve, March 11th, our Celebration quartet (Jack Teuber, Bruce Brede, Bill Dabbs and Roger Holm, subbing for Greg Moss), sang an eight-song gig wishing a Happy Birthday to Shirley Wood at her White Lake home. She and her family of about twenty-five especially appreciated "Shirley, Shirley, Bless Your Heart" and "This Little Light of Mine." The four preschoolers sat down front for "Kitty, Kitty" and afterwards one of them said to his dad at the front door, "I want to see them leave." Now there's a perceptive kid!

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Our district champions will host the Spring Convention in Kalamazoo, but as HARMONY HERITAGE, they are no more. They have decided to change their name to THE GUARDIANS OF HARMONY.

This year's Joe Barbershop Chorus will sing two songs we know well! And under the direction of a famous director, Jay Giallombardo.

He would like to meet at 10:30 a.m. for a half hour run-through of "Sweet and Lovely," and "Wait Till the Sun Shines Nellie." The JBC will serve as mike testers for the 11:00 a.m. start of the chorus contest. [Jay is] one of the true legends and brightest minds of our Society. Jay is a certified Music Judge (and will be on our panel!), an accomplished arranger <http://www.gsbmedalmusic.com>, current director of the gold medal winning chorus (NEW TRADITION from Northbrook, IL), and a gold medalist quartet singer (GRANDMA'S BOYS). (from Al Fisk)

Dave Anderson informs us that the **worship service** at Kalamazoo District Convention will be at 9am in the lower level of the Radisson Hotel. POWER PLAY, GUARDIANS OF HARMONY, and SINGING WITH DAD will perform, and attendees will join in favorite old hymns in four part harmony.

Denny Gore is retiring from ANTIQUES ROADSHOW after four years and two Senior Quartet medals with Raleigh Bloch, Roger Lewis, and Lee Hanson. They're looking for a new Lead.

"From May 2-May 16, the guys from **THREE MEN AND A TENOR** will be returning to Germany to sing for the families and the kids of our troops on eight different U.S. Military Bases." To help underwrite their trip, visit their website at <http://www.threemenandatenor.com/>

AROUND AMERICA AND THE WORLD

Buckeye Invitational, Friday, August 18, 2006, Columbus, Ohio

How about American Idol Meets Barbershop? At the risk of creating controversy, it's going to be different at the Buckeye Invitational this year. Two quartets on the stage together, competing against each other.

The winner moves on to the next round.

As is typical for Buckeye Invitational, scoring will be a combination of certified judges and audience judging, with the audience scores being entered with hand held computer entry devices so the winners can be projected immediately onto the large screen.

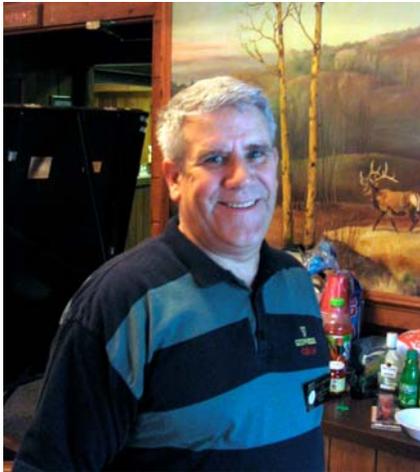
It will take three rounds to whittle the 16 quartet field down to the winner.

If that's not enough to attract you to the 2006 Buckeye Invitational, then how about: REALTIME, MAXQ, FRED, SPOTLIGHT, GOTCHA, and the Cleveland Region 17 champion chorus. Details about the format will be posted soon on the Buckeye Invitational website, <http://www.buckeyeinvitational.org>

Now you can hear **Barbershop on your computer**. The Applause Show – featuring the best of Barbershop Harmony and Contemporary A Cappella Music – can be heard every Thursday night, 7:00-10:00 pm (EST) on www.wdvrfm.org

Quite a thread on harmonet over the name of **RIPTIDE**. Only Tim Reynolds remains of the 2001 international medalist foursome so they must change their name. (They should have already.)

MEET GIL SCHREINER and TOM NEWMAN



Gil and Tom are two of our newest members, and have been friends and working colleagues for years.

Gil was born in Detroit, and has lived in Royal Oak, Sylvan Lake, and now Waterford. His father was a tool and die maker at Pontiac Motors. His mom was a homemaker while raising the four kids, and then worked at the Oakland County Probate Court.

Gil graduated from Waterford Township High in 1967. After several years in a machine shop, he was drafted, and sent to Vietnam. Upon his return he worked for several small shops, including one on the west side of the state, before joining Fairlane Tool Company in Fraser in 1986, where he met Tom.

Most of the small shops Gil worked for are now out of business, though (he laughs) whether from his employment or his leave-taking is undetermined.

He has also taken a few business classes at OCC under the GI bill.

He met his wife, Mary, after returning from the service. They have filled the house with five daughters, the youngest being 18-year-old twins, and Gil and Mary have four grandkids, including (gasp, at last) one grandson to help Gil survive all that estrogen.

Gil has dabbled in music all his life, both vocal and instrumental. He remembers being assigned a hymn to learn by a Lutheran school teacher, and singing solo in church one Christmas eve. He also took piano lessons for a year, transitioned to a small pump organ, and still occasionally strums his guitar.

After getting past the nervousness, he began singing karaoke at the Heart of the Lakes VFW post on Airport Road. Then Tom got involved and (as Gil puts it) went bananas, buying increasingly sophisticated karaoke machines for parties in the basement. Gil's kids like to sing and have also gotten involved.

Since Gil sang in the church choir with Ted Prueter, Ted invited him to the Big Chief Chorus. Gil went, liked it, and soon brought Tom along. Gil began singing in the bass section next to Roger, but couldn't reach those really low notes. Despite a feeling that the Lead section was for elite singers, he decided (with Dick's help) that the range was appropriate, and he moved.

He can imagine getting involved in quartetting after he retires from his rather demanding job.

Tom Newman was born in Detroit and raised in Sterling Heights. His dad, a draftsman, and his mom, a homemaker, raised seven kids.

Tom graduated from Stevenson High School in 1971 and immediately joined the Marine Corps. He was sent to Okinawa, and was bound for Vietnam as a Communications specialist when the war started winding down. He ended up in London, at the American Embassy, where, in 1974, he met his wife, Maggie, an Irish school teacher.

After six years in the Marines, Tom relocated to metro Detroit. With some reluctance, Maggie followed him. They live in Macomb Township and have raised one son (and an English bulldog) who is just finishing his degree in architecture from Lawrence Tech.

Tom got a job at Fairlane Tool Company in 1978. He buttressed his job with a degree from Macomb Community College in Machining Metals Technology, and has done additional work in Industrial Management. He is now Manufacturing Manager.

Tom had been into instrumental music in his youth, especially trombone, but also clarinet and baritone. Two years ago, at a family outing, he had occasion to sing karaoke, which was so much fun and so well received that it became a passion. He got his friend Gil Schreiner involved too, and when Gil joined the choir at Ted Prueter's church, the link was established to the Big Chief Chorus.

Never having heard of barbershop before, Tom began singing in the chorus as a Lead, but believes his Johnnie-Cash-range voice would be appropriate for baritone also.

Nowadays, when he and Maggie visit her family in Ireland, he sings with the Polyphonics Barbershop chorus there too.

Big Chief Jeopardy #5

1. Answer: Macomb County's Harmony Heritage Chorus refused to sing in the evening show. (Issue#19) Question: What was controversial about the Fall, 2002 District competition in Battle Creek?
2. Answer: He played trombone in the Les Brown band and the Bob Hope Christmas tour of Korea in 1956. (Issue #26) Question: Who is Lew Mahacek?
3. Answer: He spent three years in Japan, as a soldier, mail clerk, baseball player, and, believe it or not, football player. (Issue # 34) Who is Bill Nevaux?

Big Chief Jeopardy #6 (Try these.)

1. Answer: He reported that our website has had an average rate of 40 hits and 33 files requested per day. (Issue #20)
2. Answer: He described his journey from the Pontiac Merry Motormen, to the Rochester Heart of the Hills, to singing tenor in Vocal Majority. (Issue # 27)
3. Answer: He arranged for the BCC to obtain a new Class B Uniform – Midnight Blue Blazer with Heather Gray Slacks. (Issue # 35)

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING March 8, 2006, Excerpts from Bill Holmes' minutes.

Present: President Zaven Melkonian and all members of the Board

Dick Johnson's treasurer's report: current balance is \$23,924.

Dick Johnson distributed copies of the 2006 budget. Dick reminded the chorus again that we do not have liability coverage for members on the stage.

Wayne Cheyne reported that the Pioneer District is one of three districts which have increased its membership. Our chapter installed five new members and Traverse City received six new members.

Discussion was held regarding having the section leaders contact absentees when a members misses about two rehearsals. This is to determine if there are any problems. The members are encouraged to contact their section leader when they know they may miss a rehearsal. Such notice of this procedure can be placed in the attendance book.

Roger Holm submitted a list of western songs which are available for the chorus and for quartets. The list was reviewed and notes were made on who currently may use the individual songs. Assistance will be given to quartets wishing to make a selection of a song(s) appropriate for their singing. Roger said

he will be ordering copies of "Ain't Misbehavin'" from the Society since we cannot be sure we did so initially.

Jack Teuber reported we have had a request to sing on October 26, 2006 at the Waterford Rotary Club. Jack submitted a list of singout(gigs) and listed all the valentine singouts.

Pete Mazzara submitted the schedule for the retreat.

Ron Clarke is the Show Chairman for the 2006 Fall Show. He is excited about the possibilities for the show and wants members to forward him any input and suggestions they might have to make it a fun, successful western show. FERMATA NOWHERE will be scheduled as guest quartet for the show.

Jeff Doig presented info on the website. Following discussion, it was moved that we use www.bigchiefchorus.org for the website identification.

Dick Johnson spoke about the Director's College. He reported it would benefit him to attend the weekend sessions for directors which would cost \$195. The board approved this scholarship amount for our Director.

Jack Teuber presented an array of business cards. Following much discussion, Jack will take the suggestions for review and for a draft. He will bring such a card back to the board for approval.

Some thought will be given to having a Guest Nite, possibly in September. This matter is tabled.

Lyle Howard was selected by the board as Barbershopper of the Month.

Ron Clarke is in charge of the chapter's blue shirts (soon to be our summer shirts...the board is considering a different shirt or sweater for winter months.)

Bruce Brede has volunteered to chair YOUTH IN HARMONY.

Odds and Ends:

Has anybody tried the online course in sight-reading, mentioned last month?

I keep thinking of reporter Linda Mah's comment in last month's Smoke Signals: "Yet when you hear four voices blending, sometimes hitting that harmonic ring so sweetly that it turns the air to honey, you think simple isn't so bad." Who has said it better?

Al Fisk asked whether we wanted to be scored at Kalamazoo. What am I missing?

50th Annual Woodshed Contest (April 7)

Nineteen Michigan barbershoppers have responded so far to our special invitation to all past Woodshed badge winners. If you, or someone you know, has been a past badge winner, could you please reply to our V.P. of Marketing and Public Relations, Jack Teuber, at JackTeuber@aol.com or 248-334-3686.

Wikipedia is the web-based free encyclopedia. Derek Hatley writes that he really likes its definition of Barbershop. Let me know what YOU think. It's at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barbershop_music

Sound and Music (the second in a semi-regular series by Bruce Brede)

We must choose our music carefully. Some of us forget that music and song are also positive affirmations. Sometimes I'm surprised and disappointed when I discover that the words to a tune I like are very negative. It's disappointing because it means if I keep listening to and singing a song like that, I will keep repeating those negative affirmations, which isn't something any of us should want to do.

Since music, songs and words are working on a vibrational level and quickly enter our subconscious minds, it's a good idea to choose songs that are positive and life-affirming if we want to feel good (feel God?). I believe our Music Committee and Director are very diligent before falling in love with a new song for us to sing. When I leave rehearsal, I'm pooped but with a feeling that keeps my brain singing well past midnight.

Letters to the editor:

Hi John: Have had a very nice time out here with the many mountain sights, great highways, and very friendly weather. Thanks so much for the SMOKE SIGNALS. We return on April 3. Warmly, **Bill (Nevaux)** and Candy.

[On page 6 of the March SMOKE SIGNALS] you mention that Raleigh Block replaced Al Bonney as District President. Actually, he replaced Bruce Smith who was President for past two years after replacing Al Bonney who also served two terms. **Paul Howe**, [Editor, Lansing Woodshedder Weekly]

Note: All un-attributed articles and photos are by John Cowlshaw

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Director: Dick Johnson,

Assistant Directors: Fred McFadyen, Lyle Howard, & Bill Holmes

President: Zaven Melkonian (248-698-1144)

Past President: Pete Mazzara

VP: Chapter Dev: Wayne Cheyne

VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm

VP: Marketing & PR: Jack Teuber

Secretary: Bill Holmes

Treasurer: Dick Johnson

Members at Large: Ron Clarke, Bruce Brede

Chorus Manager: Art Carinci

MusicTeam: Holm, Johnson, Doig, Ensign, McFadyen, Melkonian, Murray, Pruetter

Calendar

Apr 4, T Rehearsal, Crary

Apr 7, F, 7:30 50th Annual Woodshed Contest, PTK country club

Apr 11, T Rehearsal, Choir Room, Central Methodist
Apr 11, T SPEBSQSA birthday, Founded 1938
Apr 12, W, 7pm Exec Bd. Meeting, Pete Mazzara's home
Apr 17, M Pontiac/Waterford Chpt birthday, Founded 1943
Apr 18, T Rehearsal (Crary closed – Meet at Central Methodist Church.)
Apr 25, T Rehearsal, Crary
Apr 27, Th Possible extra rehearsal at Central Methodist Church
Apr 28-30 Pioneer District Convention
May 2, T Rehearsal, Crary
May 9, T, 7pm Lockwood of Waterford – M-59 at Crescent Lake (Behind Krogers)
May 9, T, 8pm Rehearsal, Crary
May 10, W Exec Bd Meeting, Jack Teuber's home
May 12, F 3pm Mothers' Day Tribute, American House, Manor 6, 3617 S. Adams Rd, Rochester
May 16, T, 7:30 Grosse Pointe Fun Night, Elks Club, 21728 Harper, St. Clair Shores (between 8 and 9 Mile Rds)
May 19-21 Harmony Roundup, E. Lansing
May 23, T Rehearsal, Crary
May 30, T Rehearsal, Last one of year at Crary
Jun 16, F Windsor Send-Off
Jun 20, 7:30 Orion Township hall Summer Concert Series, 2525 Joslyn Rd
Jun 27, T Flint Bratfest at Frankenmuth
Jul 2-9 BHS International, Indianapolis
July 27, Th Oxford Summer Concert Series, 7-9 PM
Aug 18, F BCC Picnic, 7:00pm
Aug 18, F Buckeye Invitational, Columbus OH
Aug 23, W Independence Oaks, 11:00 AM, Senior Health & Fitness Expo
Aug Bush League