



BIG CHIEF CHORUS
SMOKE SIGNALS



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

Vol. 9, No. 7,

November 1, 2009

God-speed, Bob Butcher

We knew that Bob had a cardiac arrhythmia, but he could talk with us about it and about the treatments and the prognosis.

Now the talking is over. Bob died on Saturday, October 3, of cardiac arrest. What a blow to the Big Chief Chorus, to the baritone section, to Local Color, and, of course, to Mary and his family – his two sons, Gene and Ken, and daughter-in-laws, and his three grandchildren.

The chorus gathered, October 7, at Coats our love and appreciation Blue, we sang “Precious Prayer.” Local Color, standing in for Bob at emotional “Shenandoah.” experience and his love of we entered the funeral of veterans and riders.



Photo from Coats Funeral Home Obituary

Bob was a member of the chorus for 3 ½ yrs, and a Board member for the last two. The Smoke Signals interview with Bob is in Issue #80, December, 2007. http://www.bigchiefchorus.org/Smoke_Signals/2007/Issue%2080-%20Dec%202007.pdf

43 strong, on Wednesday, Funeral Home, to show of Bob. Led by Tom Lord” and “Irish Parting with Dick Johnson bari, sang a very Bob’s Vietnam War Harleys were evident as home between two rows

From our Director:

Men of the BCC,
 Thank you again for your time/commitment and willingness to put on another really good “shew”! I think we have made some significant progress of late on some really challenging music for us. Let’s continue to move forward with our unit sound/blending of vowels, use of the low breath, and communicating the words and music to our audience. We continue to improve but we really need to listen to one another so that the chords are really in tune like a fine-tuned quartet.

We also need to make sure that the notes/rhythms/words are ready so that we can begin to “frost the cake” instead of still having to mix the batter and bake it.

Looking for 50+ at our remaining rehearsals. What a showing that would be to our audience to have a riser full of guys! Let’s continue to amaze ourselves with what we can produce as a local organization.

AROUND THE PATCH

November 7! Need we say more?

~~RESISTING-A-REST~~ has had to cancel their appearance on our show. Their bass, Phil Haines, has developed a problem with his jaw that prevents singing. Phil spent a couple of days at the Mayo Clinic in Minn. right after last weekend’s district contest. Mayo was able to diagnose his problem and prescribe a treatment.

Their replacement, THE PARTY, are no slouches! They represented Pioneer District at International last July and scored 79.8, which is 6 pts higher than their Prelim score in Traverse City, an almost unheard-of improvement. That wasn’t enough to move them into the Semi-Finals (top 20), yet it was only a few clicks beneath VOCE (83.7), who were mike-testers for the Finals.

Annual elections were held at our weekly meeting, October 20. The newly elected officers are:

- President – Jack Teuber
- Past President: Doc Mann
- VP: Chapter Dev: Bill Holmes
- VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm
- VP: Marketing & PR: open
- Secretary: Bill Auquier
- Treasurer: Dick Johnson
- Members at Large – Wayne Cheyne, Ron Clarke, Erik Domke, Fred Pioch

Mel Coleman visited our rehearsal October 27 from the Livingston Lamplighter chapter. He pointed out, not entirely facetiously, that Stan Lawrence, Jim Claflin, and he are three Livingston members, constituting an official visit to BCC and requiring a return visit by BCC.

H1N1

Be sure to pick up Jim Owens' info sheet on H1N1. In his comments, Jim emphasizes the importance of "social distancing" and common hygienic behaviors.

Most of us are older and may have some limited immunity to H1N1. With vaccine supplies currently limited, the target population to receive the vaccine includes: pregnant women, youth from 6 mos to 24 years, folk from 25-64 with health issues, caregivers for children less than 6 mos, and healthcare workers and emergency services personnel. If you fit one of these groups, you can avoid long lines by pre-registering at the Oakland County Health Department web site: http://www.oakgov.com/health/info_pub/main_flu_info.html

Waterford's 23rd Annual Tree Lighting

"I spent time at Waterford Parks and Recreation today. They have a 64 page brochure that goes to every home in Waterford. The Big Chief Chorus will have a spot somewhere between page 2 and 5. The BCC will also have a link on the Recreation Dept. website. There is no charge for this ad in the brochure. Smile when you sing for Santa Claus on December 7th." (Jack Teuber)

Note **Zaven Melkonian's new email address.**

zmelkon@gmail.com

With Bob Butcher's death, **LOCAL COLOR IV** has decided to disband.

BCC performances, thru October. 78 performances to 4733 people.

QUARTETS

(No activity; all too busy getting ready for the show.)

MEMBERSHIP (at 62)

Renewals: Lance Shew (3), Gil Schreiner (5), Lew Mahacek (8), Bruce LaMarte (37)

November Birthdays: Ron Clarke (8th), Lance Shew (12th), Doc Mann (13th), Gil Schreiner (18th), Marv Wilson (19th), Bob Greenwood (20th), Paul Smith (21st), Fred McFadyen (24th), Lew Mahacek (25th)

Medical: Jim Claflin has been experiencing severe gout.

In Memoriam, Nov 19, 2006, Bill Pascher, Smoke Signals #68

AROUND THE DISTRICT

In the Pioneer District competition, Mount Pleasant's Mountaintown Singers won the chorus competition with a score of 75.1%, and will be going to International next July in Philadelphia. Motor City Metro, Grand Rapids, and D.O.C. were the next three highest scoring choruses.

RESISTING-A-REST won the quartet competition and also the right to go to International Seniors competition in January, with a score of 73%.

As Paul Howe said, in Lansing's Woodshedder Weekly, "This is where things get interesting. The new winners were presented their trophies by last year's winners. SOMETHING BIG! presented to RESISTING-A-REST. (Steve Warnaar is Baritone in both quartets) Then last year's senior quartet champions, RESISTING-A-REST, presented trophies to this year's champions, RESISTING-A-REST.! Does this mean that Steve shook hands with himself twice and then presented himself with the trophies?"

JIMDONOLGY featuring our Jim Claflin on Lead, along with Toby Shaver, THE PARTY Tenor, Don Horton, Lansing Bari and James Masalskis, WILDCARD Bass, competed at District and received a 59%. Way to go, Jim.



Big Chief Jeopardy, #33. (Did you get these?)

1. **Answer:** He directed the Big Chief Chorus in a performance of the Star-Spangled Banner to open the ball game between the Detroit Tigers and the Minnesota Twins at Comerica Park, Tuesday, August 8, 2006. **Question:** Who is Dick Johnson?
2. **Answer:** This barbershop chorus appeared on "America's Got Talent" and made the cut. **Question:** Who is Westminster Chorus?

Big Chief Jeopardy, #34. (Try these.)

1. **Answer:** His activities have included: the Confederate Air Force, soccer referee, Nicaraguan waters, Granada expedition, and the U.S. Naval Institute.
2. **Answer:** Belt-breathing, Giallomarado, four-square breathing, zhoom-bubble, yah-tongue, and ornery ogre. (Clues to the Questions in Issues # 66 and 76.)

MEET TOM BLACKSTONE

Tom's father was an oil geologist in Houston Texas, where Tom was born in 1948. Five years later, the search for oil took the family to Lafayette, LA, where Tom was raised a Cajun with his five brothers and sisters. In high school, influenced by Peter, Paul and Mary, Simon and Garfunkle, and Crosby, Stills and Nash, he took up guitar and learned to sing harmonies.



He attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana and graduated from LSU with a degree in electrical engineering. Upon graduation, he joined the Navy and spent two years in such global locations as Hong Kong, Manila, Hawaii, San Diego, and San Francisco, serving on the destroyer, USS Carpenter (DD825), as an anti-submarine officer, and rising in rank from Ensign to LtJG.

Upon his return to civilian life in 1973, he married his college sweetheart, Janis. He turned his old college summer job selling dictionaries into a full-time position hiring, training, and motivating teams of salespeople. His experience in sales and marketing took him to DuPont

in 1974 as a sales rep in plastic resins and sheeting for the auto industry. In 1980 he left DuPont to serve as vice president of his brother's business in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, that specialized in heat-treating weld junctions of steel piping used in the pipeline, chemical and oil industry, to prevent cathodic reaction degradation of the weld. When his sister-in-law, who was primary stock holder, divorced his brother, Tom returned to DuPont. Dupont transferred him to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and then in 1990 to the Detroit area. Foreseeing reductions in auto-related industries, Tom took a buyout in 1998, received his insurance license (life and health), and now works as an independent agent.

Tom's introduction to Barbershop Singing came in Milwaukee. While entertaining customers at a Brewers baseball game, he heard the sweet voice of a Sweet Adeline in the adjacent box seats. Conversing with her, he learned of a new barbershop chorus beginning in Milwaukee. He ended up joining that chorus just as it met the roster hurdle to register with the society as a new barbershop chorus that many of us know today as the Midwest Vocal Express.

When he moved to Rochester, Michigan, he joined the Macomb chorus and in his first year (1990) went to International Competition in Louisville. Later he decided to reduce his drive time by joining the Rochester chorus directed by Al Fisk. Although he had been singing Lead, he switched to Tenor in order to join his first quartet, the HARMONY KNIGHTS (with Jeff Doig, Tom Tailford, and Ross Ensign). Jeff brought them on into the Pontiac-Waterford chorus. When

Macomb made a new effort at International, Tom decided to rejoin them as a primary chorus but maintained dual membership with the Big Chief Chorus. During this period, Tom took part in competing on the International Stage in Salt Lake City and later in Denver. In 2006 he teamed up with Chuck Murray, Mike Green, and Bob McCaffrey in a new quartet called The BATH CITY BOYZ.

In 2009, an invitation to join VINTAGE as Tenor led to his resurgence of choral singing with the Big Chiefs. Tom is also singing with a new quartet that he and Jeff Doig are forming. In addition, this past Saturday, he joined up with Mike Green, Bob McCaffrey, and Jeff Spires as a show quartet in the Rochester chorus's presentation of "Back to Radio" which garnered an audience of 600 at Rochester High School.

Janis is a nurse in the Orthopedic Rehab unit at Crittenton Hospital. They live in Rochester, and travel to the South, from time to time, to visit family in Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Houston, and Beaumont, Texas. Tom and Janis have two children – Ashlie who teaches 8th grade science at the Cranbrook School, and Jason who works for the Navy in Pensacola FL. There is one grandchild, two-year-old Wyatt, and a second on the way. Tom's main hobbies are golfing, singing, Cajun cooking and spending time with family.



ASK THE DIRECTOR

Q: "What was your concert Tuesday night, and how did it go?"

A: Easy one! The concert this past October 21 was the first of the year and featured the Rochester Adams Concert Choir (grades 9-11), the Advanced Women's Ensemble (grades 10-12) and the Chamber Choir (grades 10-12). The concert opened as we do each fall with a combined-choirs "Star Spangled Banner." The Concert Choir featured folk songs including a Stephen Foster song, "Nelly Bly." The Women's Ensemble featured a Czech song and selection with clarinet, "How Can I Keep from Singing" and a song made popular by the King's Singers, "You Are the New Day." The Chamber Choir closed the concert with popular songs like "Danny Boy" and "Java Jive" along with some contemporary choral music by such composers as Dickau, Stroope and Gawthrop.

The concert closed with a piece called "River in Judea" and was a huge success with more than our usual attendance and a one-minute ovation at the end of the concert!

The concert also kicked off our fall fundraising campaign. We are not going to solicit parents for fruit, nuts or various wrapping papers, but simply ask parents, friends and supporters to donate directly to the choir department in hopes of raising money for tuxedos and dresses. We have a lead on some dresses, but we are in need of our own tuxedos (approximately thirty) because it is getting too

complicated to share with the band members as both programs are growing and many performances overlap throughout the year.

I have a great group of kids this year again and we are hoping to focus on making music at a high level of excellence in performance.

Walking the Keyboard

Stan Lawrence sent along this link to a stairway that was turned into a piano keyboard by Volkswagen:

<http://www.autoblog.com/2009/10/08/video-volkswagen-wants-you-to-have-fun-taking-the-stairs/#continued>

Toothpaste tubes

There is this gender thing about toothpaste tubes. Women squeeze them from the top. Men squeeze them from the bottom. When we sing, let's sing like men! We have to squeeze the air out from the bottom of our "air-tube," from our bellies, and not from up top in the throat and chest.

Music Ed by Ted

Ted Norton, a retired Houghton College, NY music professor, has a web site with topics for barbershoppers like "Music reading," "Intonation," and "Rhythm." <http://musicsted.info/indexSite/index.html> Let me know if you find any section of this particularly helpful.

"Musicians hear better," from NPR, October 19, 2009.

Musical training can improve your hearing, according to several studies presented in Chicago at Neuroscience 2009, the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience. The studies found that serious musicians are better than other people at perceiving and remembering sounds. But it's not because they have better ears. Sounds come in through the ears. But they travel through the nervous system and get interpreted by the brain.

(In the first study), fifteen classically trained musicians and 16 nonmusicians listened to a voice reciting simple sentences against an increasingly loud backdrop of other conversations.

Another study presented at Neuroscience 2009 suggests that musical training could help children who are struggling with language.

A third study by scientists found that musicians could detect harmonies that were slightly off-key even when they had lost most of their hearing. Factory workers with similar hearing loss could not.

Results like these make sense if you think about the brain and the hearing system as if they were muscles, says Dr. Mark Jude Tramo, a professor of neurology at Harvard and director of the [Institute for Music & Brain Science](#).

Tennis players tend to be good arm wrestlers because they have strong forearms, Tramo says. In much the same way, he says, a musician who exercises

certain parts of the brain "is going to be able to do better on any task that involves auditory concentration."

American Harmony Wins Best Documentary!

At the [San Diego Film Festival](#) on September 26, *American Harmony, the Movie*, took home the award for Best Documentary! The best part? The votes came almost entirely from regular festival attendees, as there were only approximately three barbershoppers in attendance!

The movie has also been nominated by the Independent Documentary Association for an Alan Ert Award, for "Best Musical Documentary of 2008," and has received the following awards: the Audience Award, Runner-up Feature Documentary, Sedona Film Festival; Winner, Golden Ace Award, Las Vegas Film Festival; and Winner, Silver Lei Award, Honolulu Film Festival.

Now it's time for us to put our money where our mouths were, and buy tickets for the **Metro Detroit showing of American Harmony**. Here is a direct link to the DIA Film Theater web site, giving the info on American Harmony – even a nice picture of Max Q – and times and ticket purchase info.

<http://www.dia.org/df/item.asp?webitemid=2018>

Nov. 20-21 @ 7:00 p.m. Nov. 22 @ 2:00 & 4:00 p.m.

Here is the DIA's description to the general public: "Every year, thousands compete in the world's greatest singing competition... that you've never heard of. American Harmony journeys deep into the ultra-obsessive and completely heartfelt world of the International Championships of Barbershop Singing, where passion is equaled only by raw talent, and the ultimate reward isn't fortune or even fame, but victory. The movie's focus narrows down from fifty quartets to the final four, all looking to take home the coveted gold medal in what turns out to be the closest and most heatedly controversial conclusion in the contest's 70 year history. By the time this delightful movie's final moments approach, the suspense is as palpable as the rich and surprisingly primal pleasure these beautifully combined voices provide. And to win this contest, it's not enough to simply have one "idol" – indeed, these are teams that can only score if they're in perfect harmony. (86 min.) "This is truly the must-see movie doc of 2009." - Chris Gore, Filmthreat.com

Pandora, the Music Genome Project

I have written before about Pandora. This personal music selection system now has 35 million listeners and is growing by 65,000 new sign-ups a day. "It's the most comprehensive analysis of music ever undertaken. Together our team of

fifty musician-analysts has been listening to music, one song at a time, studying and collecting literally hundreds of musical details on every song. It takes 20-30 minutes per song to capture all of the little details that give each recording its magical sound - melody, harmony, instrumentation, rhythm, vocals, lyrics ... and more - close to 400 attributes!"

Then, when you tell Pandora you like a certain song or artist, it will create a station that plays music with the same attributes.

You should give it a try! Go to <http://www.pandora.com/> register, and then type in, let's say, our Gold Medalist quartet MAX Q. Within a minute it forms a station that includes songs by GAS HOUSE GANG, REALTIME, and KEEPSAKE. Feedback allows it to add songs and artists and fine-tune what it gauges as your preferences.

Pandora was recently featured in the New York Times Magazine. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/18/magazine/18Pandora-t.html?_r=1&th=&emc=th&pagewanted=all

"However things play out for Pandora as a business, its approach is worth understanding if you're interested in the future of listening. It's the "social" theories of music-liking that get most of the attention these days: systems that connect you with friends with similar tastes, or that rely on "collaborative filtering" strategies that cross-match your music-consumption habits with those of like-minded strangers.

"Pandora's approach more or less ignores the crowd. It is indifferent to the possibility that any given piece of music in its system might become a hit. The idea is to figure out what you like, not what a market might like. More interesting, the idea is that the taste of your cool friends, your peers, the traditional music critics, big-label talent scouts and the latest influential music blog are all equally irrelevant. That's all cultural information, not musical information. ... Pandora's approach distances music-liking from the cultural information that generally attaches to it."

Other music sites

(From Ross Ensign)

Here is another one of those sites that is full of old music (probably soon to be removed for copyright infringement). Listen (to nearly 100 artists) while it lasts <http://www.mikesoldiestoo.com/>

Here is another link - to Disney songs. I wouldn't recommend it until AFTER the show, because the interps are too different and it'll be confusing to our poor addled and overworked brains. <http://www.stlyrics.com/c/classicdisney.htm>

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, Oct 14, 2009 (Excerpts from Bill Auquier's minutes)

Present: Mann, Holm, Holmes, Dick Johnson, Clarke, Domke, Teuber, Melkonian, Auquier.

The treasury stands at \$13,524.

Approved to pay \$225 for the Christmas tour bus.

Approved to request all board members to submit a budget for 2010, by November 18, 2009.

V.P. for Chapter Development Bill Holmes that our average rehearsal attendance last month was 42.

Bill has accepted applications for membership from Jeff Kafer and Wayne Oberstadt.

V.P. for Marketing and Publicity Jack Teuber submitted our December schedule:

VP Music and Performance Roger Holm reported: a Music committee meeting Nov 15, only one sing-out per night for Christmas chorus, Dickens Festival Dec 12, 4:30 (last bus stop), pricing on a policy manual for all members, a request for ways to address minimum singing requirements, a determination that outside coaching by Todd Wilson was cost-prohibitive, confirmation of Sep 24-26 for retreat at MacMullan center. Formation of a chorus ensemble was discussed and tabled for future attention.

Show chairman Ron Clarke reported on show progress. Donna Bevington has family commitments that required her to resign as stage manager. Donna has enlisted the people she trusts to fill in during her absence. Bruce Brede is handling the cast party duties. Ticket prices are: \$5.00 for chorus members and \$15.00 for guests. Eric Domke has made 30 comp. tickets to the show available to local school music departments.

2010 Singing Valentines will be sold for Feb. 12th-14th.

All unattributed articles and photos by John Cowlislaw

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Director: Thomas Blue (248-814-9627)

Assistant Directors: Fred McFadyen, Dick Johnson, & Bill Holmes

President: Doc Mann (248-628-0189)

Past President: Zaven Melkonian

VP: Chapter Dev: Bill Holmes

VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm

VP: Marketing & PR: Jack Teuber

Secretary: Bill Auquier

Treasurer: Dick Johnson

Members at Large – Bob Butcher, Wayne Cheyne, Ron Clarke, Erik Domke

Chorus Manager: Bob Greenwood

