



Pontiac Waterford Chapter SPEBSQSA

Bulletin, July 17, 2001

Big Chief Chorus Sings: Tuesdays, 7:30-10:00

Crary Middle School, 501 N. Cass Lake Rd

Waterford, MI

Chapter Executive Board

Officers

Chorus Director: Chris Miller

President: Gene Downie

VP, Chapter Development: Walt DeNio

VP, Music and Performance: John Smith

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Service Chair: Bruce Brede

Singing Valentine Chair: Bob Marshall

Chorus Manager: Jeff Spires

Music Librarian: Roger Holm

Uniform Manager: Bill Auquier

Sunshine Man: Don Denoyer

Bulletin Editor: John Cowlshaw

Calendar

Jul 24	Party Time with Power Play, Macomb
Jul 29-Aug 5	Harmony College, St. Joseph, MO
Jul 31	First Linda Liddicoat coaching date
Aug 9	Board Meeting
Aug 11	Picnic, Walt Bachman's home
Sep 28-30	Bush League 2001, Gaylord
Oct 19-21	District Convention, Battle Creek
Oct	Election of officers, 2002
Nov 3	Fall show "Fortune in Dreams"
Nov 6	Christmas singout season begins

Membership: Renewals for Mazzara (2 yrs), Teuber (2 yrs), Jackson (3 yrs), Ripley (4 yrs), McDowell (6 yrs), Braun (12 yrs), Plosky (18 yrs), Twomey (21 yrs), Dabbs (31 yrs), and Sheridan (40 yrs).

Ill: Bill Dabbs spent three days in the hospital last weekend with a painful attack of diverticulitis. The ensuing liquid diet hasn't done good things for his energy.

Barbershopper of the month (June) Yong McDowell, for his development of the Chapter's website: www.pontiacchapter.com.

The **63rd Annual Convention** in Nashville was well represented by Big Chiefs (Bill Holmes, Yong McDowell, Chris Miller, Bill Pascher, Jeff Spires, and John Cowlshaw). Bill Pascher was the only one of us to make it to the big stage in the Gaylord Entertainment Center, however, when he was one of a dozen barbershoppers honored as 50- and 60-year members during Saturday's Chorus competition. White-capped, and cane swinging, he grinned broadly as he was introduced.

Our fearless director **Chris Miller** did manage to get on stage in Nashville. Fortunately, it wasn't the contest stage. It seems that 37th place quartet Sibling Rivalry showed up in the same crowded Irish pub across from the convention center where Chris, Nancy and friends were eating dinner. The young woman entertainer from New Zealand heard that there was a quartet in the house and asked them to sing our National Anthem to start off the evening. Sibling Rivalry was a baritone short so Chris answered the call to fill in on stage. SR+1 gave a stellar performance to a standing

ovation (wink). Not bad for four guys who had never met before. I hear that pictures are available. Jeff Spires and John Cowlshaw wandered into the same bar the next night, and they were still talking about it. (I lie.)

The week began off-tempo for Chris when he checked into his hotel and hurriedly rushed Nancy and company to get to the contest on time... only to realize upon arriving that they were an hour early. Nashville's on Central Time!

I asked Chris to report on the 63rd Convention:

Report on the 63rd Convention, by Chris Miller.

The 2001 Convention held in Nashville began Wednesday, July 4th with 9,700 attending including 51 competing quartets and 21 choruses. The quartet quarter-finals began Wednesday with semi-finals on Thursday and the final top 10 quartets competing Saturday night. The scores are cumulative and each quartet sang two songs each time on stage. After three nights and six songs, "Michigan Jake" emerged with the gold. Pioneer's own barbershop quartet "Power Play" comprised of Mike Slamka, father Jack, brother Mark and cousin Don, presented a powerful performance that gave them a second place score on the Saturday night program but finished with a 5th place medal. (They were in seventh place going into the finals.)

Convention Friday, considered an "off day" was anything but off. After sitting in on chorus rehearsals with Toronto and Cincinnati in the morning, at noon, I managed to attend a massed sing at of approximately 4,000 barbershoppers singing polecats together. Afterward I attended the AIC show (past quartet champs) where legends like Lou Perry and the Schmitt brothers were honored. Platinum, Gas House Gang, The Accoustix, and Nightlife were only some of the quartets that highlighted the show. 38 family members of the last remaining Schmitt brother attended this convention to watch their father, grandfather; great grandfather sing one final song on the international stage. Some of the kids are barbershop singers today. The show lasted 3 hours and 45 minutes and I enjoyed every minute.

I had to rush dinner to hear Power Play perform live on the Grand Ole Opry to a capacity crowd of 4,000 people and a radio audience of millions. The quartet brought the audience to its feet with a standing ovation. Power Play was only supposed to sing one song but the audience wouldn't let them go and applauded until they sang an encore which received another standing O (the only act to receive an encore the entire night). The MC remarked that "following this barbershop quartet would be like following a bulldozer with a spoon". Although many in the audience were barbershoppers, I heard more than one non-barbershopper remark "if this is barbershop, I have to find more of it."

Saturday was an all day affair with 21 choruses competing all morning and afternoon. The power and performance of this caliber of chorus is awesome. All choruses sang a two-song package. Some songs made you laugh and some made you cry. When the dust settled, "The New Tradition" Chorus from Northbrook, IL under the direction of Jay Gilambardo, known as a perennial bride's maid (for always finishing second) was the undisputed winner. The "Northern Lights" Chorus from Toronto surprised many with an outstanding performance and placed 2nd with only 46 singers on stage.

Other convention highlights included the boy quartet from Russia. These 8-10 year old kids stole the show wherever they went. It was most impressive to hear the kids sing "Moscow Nights" in English while "The Great American Chorus" sang the Russian words behind them. Other people I spoke with attended the "World Harmony Round Up" that featured quartets and choruses from around the world. It got rave reviews.

Awards were presented Saturday night. Platinum sang their swan song and the Vocal Majority performed as the outgoing chorus champs (showing why they're still the best chorus in the Society). The remainder of the evening and wee hours of the morning was filled with singing. Hospitality rooms all over the city were alive with choruses and quartets performing and people woodshedding. I urge everyone to attend an International convention at least once in their life. It highlights the best of what we have to offer in the Society.

The Quartet and Chorus score sheets and photos are on the SPEBSQSA and Pioneer web sites. (www.Spebsqsa.org and www.harmonize.com/Pioneer/pio.htm.) There are hundreds of photos at <http://sunshinenet.tstretch.com/SPEB2001Intl>. Many informal convention photos are on the Web at: <http://www.wiseguys.org>. Pics of Power Play receiving medals are in "Joe's pictures" at <http://nbciofoto.com/I.jsp?m=78733217103&n=1400135240>. Click on Quartet Medals, then go to pics # 11 & 12 (3rd row down).

Bob Sutton of Alexandria reported that there had only been six **father/son medalist pairs**, and only Power Play did it with father/son in the same quartet, two ways! Jack & Mike and Jack & Mark. Now, after the 63rd Convention, double

that!

From Gary Washburn, President, Macomb County Chapter - **Proud Home of Power Play!** 5th Place Bronze Medalists 2000, 2001.

“Bottom of the 9th. Last chance in the World Series of Barbershop Quartetting. Only a grand “slam” can save the day! And they did it!! Once again Power Play has made us all proud! They are what we all would like to be - skilled, dedicated, and immensely popular barbershop ambassadors. Their Saturday night Finals showing was nothing short of miraculous, a full 100+ points MORE than both their Quarter-finals Semi-final scores. Only three sets in the entire contest scored better - and all three belonged to 2001 Champion Michigan Jake!

“The Macomb County Chapter has set aside Tuesday, July 24, 7:30 PM as **Party Time With Power Play Night!** You, your chapter members, wives and friends are all invited. The more the merrier. Last year's party was about 150 strong, and we anticipate even more this year. The location is our rehearsal site, the United Methodist Church in downtown Mt. Clemens, 57 Southbound Gratiot, at the NW corner of Cass Ave. We will have plenty to eat and lots of great Power Play music. They have cleared their schedules to be with us. We invite every one of you do to the same and help us honor one of the longest-standing top quartets in the Society. For more information, call me at (248) 202-4713 or (248) 269-4114.” (Too bad it’s chorus practice night for us!)

What is it like to move from an international award-winning chorus to Pontiac-Waterford Big Chiefs? I decided to ask this question of Wally Plosky who recently joined us when he moved back to Michigan from Atlanta, GA, where he had been a member of the Big Chicken Chorus, which was Dixie District Champions for 11 consecutive years, and competed in every SPEBSQSA International Chorus Competition since 1990, ranking as high as #3 in 1999. (8th this year)

Ed: How did you decide to join that chorus?

Wally Plosky: I actually emailed the Society and asked for choruses within 15 miles of Atlanta. I was given 3 names, including Roswell (where I lived) and Stone Mountain. I had never heard of the Big Chicken, but the name caught my attention.

Ed: Yes, where DID that name come from?

WP: When Detroit's Tom Hine formed the chorus some 14 years ago and they were hunting for a name, a bass (can you believe it?) came up with the name Big Chicken after a 3 story chicken head that was part of a KFC at a main intersection of Marietta, Georgia. (Actually it's a sentimental landmark and when the KFC was going to tear it down, community protest prevented them from so doing.)

Ed: What was your first impression?

WP: I arrived at chorus the week after they'd scored at International and didn't understand why they spent the evening drinking and talking instead of singing.

Ed: How big is the membership?

WP: About 150...with about 100 active on stage for competition

Ed: What's the director Clay Hine like?

WP: Clay is incredibly talented. He picks the songs and he can arrange them on his feet. He has changed parts of songs and tags while we were on the risers. He once changed a Xmas tag to 6-part harmony ...wow!

Ed: Are there Assistant directors, like in Vocal Majority?

WP: Yes...the music team is about ten guys...Clay's father Tom and Bill Hickman are the Bass assistant directors, Shelby Roberts and Richard Lewellen (bari of Riptide) do the baris. Tim Reynolds (lead of Riptide) does leads along with Richard Lewellen (who also directs the Birmingham barbershop chorus). We also had four wedge leaders.... and an in-house choreography director.

Ed: How are practices organized?

WP: They start at 7:00 with stretches, vocal warmups peaking at 7:30 when the chorus is turned over to Clay.

Ed: Were you expected to know the music before singing it as a chorus? Did they use learning tapes?

WP: We'd have a quartet typically sing the song for us...then sight-read. We did have tapes that were made by Tim Brooks (the Director of the Stone Mountain chapter). He could sing all 4 parts in the correct timbre so the sound-mixed tape was a perfect quartet.

Ed: Does the Chorus have quartets too?

WP: Besides FRED (Clay is their baritone), Riptide which is in the top ten internationally, and a couple of district runner-up types. I started to sing with a group and it was looking good, but our family health issue led to returning to Michigan. But the focus was on chorus.

Ed: Did you go to England in '98 with them? What was that experience like?

WP: It was great and made for an incredible year since we hosted International in July, as well as won a 5th place medal. We sang in May and had to fine-tune 28 songs for England for four shows for the British Association of

Barbershop Singers (BABS) national convention.... sorta like our district with the winner going to International. It was in Harrogate, the flower city around York and Manchester.

Ed: What seemed most important in terms of perfecting the music and presentation as you approached competition or shows?

WP: Coaching.... We had Joe Connelly, lead of current international champs, Platinum (as well as 2 other international gold quartets, Dealers Choice and Keepsake) in about 3 or 4 times a year...Greg Lyne once, Greg Clancy, (now the director of the Vocal Majority and Jim Clancy's son), and Cindy Hansen, our show presence coach (who also coaches the Vocal Majority and Northbrook among others) for about 3 to 4 times, often with Joe.

Ed: What are the Spring Shows like?

WP: We actually did a couple of cabaret shows...the biggie was our XMAS show...3 shows over a weekend.... usually sold out depending on the venue.

Ed: Big Chicken is known for its parodies. Is that same joking, fun-loving attitude present in the chorus interactions?

WP: We're pretty serious the whole rehearsal and not much of an afterglow group.... maybe 5-10 guys totally.... tends to be more business than cut-up.... but when we're on the road, we'd kinda catch up on fun and unwind.

Ed: Is there much turnover in the Chorus?

WP: About normal...probably 15 to 25% per year

Ed: How is the experience in PTK/Waterford different?

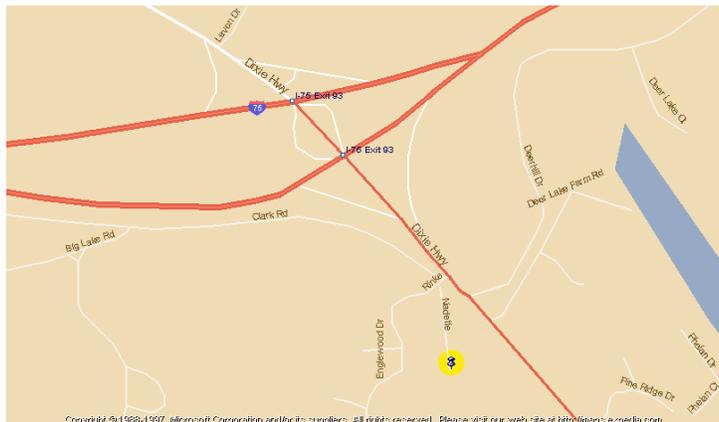
WP: More quarteting here...less structure, not as much help for Chris as he needs from the perspective of sectionals

Ed: If there were one aspect of the Big Chicken chorus experience that you could transplant into Pontiac-Waterford, what would it be?

WP: Commitment to getting better each week on the part of each of us...I found that success and good singing were the best recruitment and retention tools.... just like one guy who sings wrong notes with the wrong balance with wrong timing can spoil a chord and overtone for the chorus, singing-wise, a member who doesn't take singing seriously can spoil the attitudes of those around who want to get better.... it's a lot like school.... hard to learn when focus constantly changes and there are disruptions.

Big Chief Bulletins are now available on-line at the Chapter website www.pontiacchapter.com. Click on Officers/Members. This Bulletin needs a **name**. Any support for "**Smoke Signals**"? Other suggestions? (Maybe a prize will be awarded to the winning suggestion!)

The Chapter Picnic is Saturday, Aug 11, at the home of Walt and Margareth Bachman, 6500 Nadette, Clarkston, 248-620-0414. Just ½ mile south of the intersection of Dixie Hwy and I-75.



Recent events around the chapter:

On June 26th, the Chorus traveled to Frankenmuth for the Annual **Flint Chapter Cookout**. Flint's John Voss roasted the brats, washed down by the beer, in the Heritage Park Pavilion, on the bank of the Cass River (with an appropriate stern-wheeler paddling by). The Big Chief chorus and the Flint Chorus sang several songs to an enthusiastic response. New member Dave Willet delighted fellow barbershoppers when he was "volunteered" by Chris Miller to sing bass in an impromptu quartet with just one month of barbershop singing under his belt.

About a dozen members gathered at Bob Marshall's home July 4th to watch **fireworks** on Sylvan Lake.

The July 10th rehearsal was especially rich in **guests**, as Joe Keske, Pete Berton, and Chuck Barrett joined our practice.

Bob and Eileen Marshall announce a party August 18 at their home, to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Maybe Bob will display his tap dancing skills that he used in performance July 13th weekend.

Membership Committee. Walt DeNio reported our goal of 60 members by the end of this year. Starting from 30 members in 1998, we made our goal of 50 in 2000. One strategy: Chorus business cards, with individualized photos. Members are reminded to **wear their "blue" chapter shirts** for the next few weeks, as pictures are taken.

From around the Pioneer District:

The new **President** of the International Barbershop Harmony Society is **Roger Lewis** of the Pioneer District.

The June 17 Pionet reported the retirement of "**Keep America Singing,**" reputedly the longest-running a cappella vocal music radio show in the world. Host Dick Campbell began the show about 25 years ago on a local Battle Creek (MI) radio station. From the era of records thru tapes to CDs, he played barbershop harmony for a half hour a week, for a long while on WBCK and recently on WRCC. During the past year, the show audio also was streamed to the Web. Campbell usually featured a Sweet Adelines group, followed by a Barbershop Harmony Society quartet and then a chorus. He interspersed these with comments on the featured groups and information on the local chapters of both organizations.

From Hank Hedges: "**Bush League** is a 55 year Fun Tradition that the Gaylord Chapter took over from the originator, the now sadly defunct Boyne City Chapter. During the last 5 years we have, hopefully, carried on this Pioneer District (unofficial) weekend and perhaps added a little the fun and substance. Simply, Bush League is an opportunity for new-possibly instantaneous, or somewhat seasoned (Mature?) bunch that have not sung and placed in the top three slots of a society-sanctioned function as a formal quartet. (Man what a sentence). Admittedly, the "contestants" are judged by regular contest rules but the contest has no official standing. Just Fun. Many former "winners" have gone on to district championship and a couple have won the international title! The weekend is September 28-29-30 in Gaylord. Watch the net and the Troub for announcements and registration forms/ promotion/Updates and who's who in the sing zoo for this year. Plan to come yourself and partake in the motto: BUSH LEAGUE: THE HOME OF PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CHAMPIONS"

"**Forever Plaid,**" the Broadway and long-time touring hit (several years in Vegas, for example) is playing all summer at Cornwell's Turkeyville USA near Marshall. It's a very funny show about four guys in the 50s who form a quartet, rehearse in a basement and do chicken dinners and supermarket openings while hoping to make it big. (from Pionet)

Jim Styer reported on Pionet the death of **Burt Staffen** on July 9, and he included autobiographical notes from Burt on his early days of barbershopping in Michigan. His references include the Grand Rapids, Charlevoix, Lansing, Wayne and Detroit Metro chapters, many of the early quartets and the Society headquarters in Detroit. Anybody in Big Chiefs remember him?

From the Director's Corner:

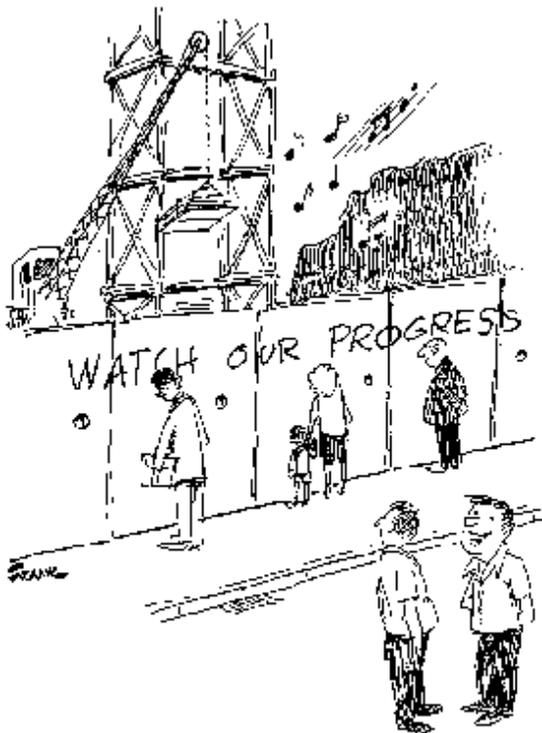
As we begin our new series of music, I urge each of you to do your homework. Each member should listen to his learning tape at least once a day. Ask your section leaders for help if needed. Rehearsal time is too short to work on learning notes. With few exceptions, sectional rehearsals should be held at 7pm or on an other-than meeting night. Rehearsal time should be used to improve balance, blend, unit sound, interpretation, dynamics and working on problem spots. It should be our objective to improve another 50 points in Spring Contest next year. Depending on the choruses competing, we should finish around 5th place at 750 points. By popular request, we will be performing two "straight" songs: "If I had The Last Dream Left In The World" and "Fortune In Dreams". These songs have a common tie and both arrangements should score well. With continued member growth and good coaching, it is possible that the Big Chief Chorus can be a contender for District gold in year 2003. ***It all depends on the commitment that each of you is willing to give.*** The following is my wish list:

TENORS – Sing with greater accuracy. Sing light like a bird (sparkle). Listen to your note in a chord and balance it. Make the chord expand.

LEADS – Lead! Sing pretty. Sing with a free and open sound. Sing with feeling. Show emotion. Sing with greater breath support (not louder). No scooping allowed.

BASS – Sing like a lead (be the engine). Sing with quick lips. Duet with the Leads. Sing TALL. Don't scoop or grovel.

BARIS – Sing on top of the notes. Sing brighter (not brown). Listen to your note in a chord and balance it. Make the chord expand. Be accurate.



"They are watching the Chorus practice!"

Board Meeting Minutes: Pete Mazzara reported the chairs of **Show committees:** Show Tickets – Jim Owens, Afterglow Tickets – Bruce Brede, Ad Kits/Program – Dick Johnson. Bruce Brede developed and distributed an **organization chart** of the chapter. The chapter received a **grant** of \$762 as a result of Gene Downie's application to help defray the cost of coaching. **Linda Liddicoat** will coach our chorus on the following dates: July 31, October 2 & 16, January 29, February 26, March 26, April 13 (Sat), April 22 (Mon). In addition, at least three dates will be established to work on presentation techniques with **Penny Savage**. Chris will contact **Ed Fritzen** (a judge) to lead a class for the chorus and evaluate our singing. Jeff Spires has accepted the position of **Chorus Manager**. Enhancements of our **uniforms** were discussed. Attendance at **International Conventions** is encouraged, but not a criterion of commitment to the Chapter. Gene has developed a **sign** to be placed on the School during each Tuesday rehearsal.

Wanted: Two "radio announcers" for shtick in the Fall Show.

Smitty's tone memory. A couple weeks ago, Smitty suggested playing a tone on a pipe and then trying to re-sing that pitch some time later. How long has your accurate memory lasted?

What is **AHSOW**? The **Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders, Inc.** Founded by Charlie Nichols at the 1977 SPEBSQSA International Convention, AHSOW originated from the vision of Barbershoppers who remembered that our Society began as a "woodshedding" organization. AHSOW is leading the preservation effort with a brand-new CD/Cassette release: "Ear-rangements #1"! See <http://www.ahsow.org>