



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

Bulletin #17, September 17, 2002

And on the web at www.pontiacchapter.com

Chorus Practices: Crary Middle School, 501 N. Cass Lake Rd,
Waterford, MI

Just 8 weeks to SHOWTIME!

NOTE! This week's practice is the **MYSTERY TRIP**. We meet at Crary, wearing Big Chief blue shirt, by **6pm**. The border-crossing has been abandoned. (Was that surprise border the one to the UP? Just too much culture shock to visit, aaargh, Yoopers?) At press-time, preparations were being made for Dick Johnson to direct: Darkness on the Delta, Let's Get Away From It All, This Little Light of Mine/Do Lord medley, and God Bless America.

AROUND THE PATCH

This year's **chapter picnic** was advertised in this very bulletin for Aug 17, but it was lightly attended. There is a very good chance that, neither you, nor the fellow sitting to your left, or the gentleman to your right, showed up. But those who were there reported a success. I know that "No one" was there. The beer and wine was provided by "No body." It was at "Who's" house. Mr. Absent Minded Bass said the food was the best yet. Mr. Knottall There liked the chance to sing without being drowned out by his fellow bari's. Every one of the leads in

attendance stayed on pitch, and that was a relief. And for once, there were enough tenors for every pick-up quartet.

Chris Miller is asking whether there are at least 15 chorus members who'd like to participate in the **Fall Convention** October 19 as an **Ensemble**. We need that many to qualify. The deadline to register is Oct 13. It would sure improve our show songs!

Show ads and Valentines combined: Bruce Brede has a great idea. Have your quartet do a freebie for those who buy ads in the program.

B Natural sang in a 9/11 tribute at The Church of Nazerine.

Good luck to **Four Wheel Drive** which competes this month at **Bush League**, in Gaylord, MI.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Ed Fritzen reports that fifteen choruses and nine quartets have signed up to sing at the **Fall District Convention**.

MEMBERSHIP (Now at 58)

Renewals: Zaven Melkonian (3), Jerry Howington (3), Wally Plosky (19), Chris Miller (26), Bruce LaMarte (31), Dick Johnson (33).

September birthdays: Dick Johnson 24th,

October birthdays: Art Carinci 18th

Barbershopper of the Month – August: Chuck Murray

Illnesses: John Northey has had heart catheterization. Welcome back to Art Ripley.

Advanced Chimp Hooting.

Now that chimp hooting is spreading thru the chorus, it's time to mention the subtler aspects. Firstly, if you're singing wrong – flat-footed, no energy, deep in your larynx, and disconnected from your belly – you won't be able to hoot like a chimp. So chimp-hooting will remind you of the error of your ways. It's diagnostic. Secondly, there is no need to bellow. Hoot like a chimp in love, not like one at war. Try it. You'll like it.

Meet Mike Keith

Mike Keith is the 3rd of the last four interviewees (see Chris Miller and Chuck Murray) to be born in the east and migrate west. Mike was born in Spangler, Pa on Aug 5, 1924, but moved to Michigan at the age of 3 when his father left the mines and joined Oakland Motor Car. His mom and aunt were virtuoso singers, and even sang regularly in the early 30's on WWJ as the Keith sisters. But when the streetcar ride to Detroit grew tiresome, she stayed home and pinned her hopes



(Chuckles Murray transfers "Interviewee" honors to Mike Keith)

on Mike, starting him early on the piano. Mike graduated from Pontiac High School in January 1943. Two months later he was in the army, 81st Division, in JASCO (Joint Assault Signal Company), training on California beaches for the Pacific landings soon to follow. From September, 1944 on, he was involved in seven landings, just behind the marines, including the bad ones at Angaur and Peleliu, where 60% of the marines were lost as they tried to walk the 1000 yards to the beach. After the war ended, he was part of the occupying force in Korea. When he returned home, he went to Ferris for a year and then joined Pontiac Motor Division on Joslyn. By the time he retired in 1980, he was managing four supervisors of maintenance in Product Engineering. Right after his retirement, he asked John "Smitty" Smith, whom he knew from work, about barbershop. Though Mike's singing had been pickup – at home, in the army singing, "Who's in the kitchen with Dinah?" and so forth – his musical heritage led him to quick involvement in the "Merry Motor Men Chorus." This

was in '81 or '82 and the chorus was struggling. Bill Pascher, Dick Johnson, Smitty Smith, and Len Barnes were all trying to keep it afloat. Soon he was singing tenor in The Merry Motor Men quartet, with Dick Johnson as Bari, Ivan Brown, a professional singer and early black member as lead, and with George Mekras as bass. Although Mike had always thought of himself as a tenor, he returned from rehearsals voiceless until he changed from singing full voice to falsetto. When Ivan and George moved on, first Len Barnes and then Roger Holm joined the quartet, and it became Harmonic Progression. Mike Meniere's disease in his right ear worsened in 1991. He'd feel so dizzy and nauseous, the room spinning, that he couldn't function even to the point of wondering if he could attend his son's wedding. For three years he dropped out of singing. He has lost 70% of his hearing in his right ear, but the Meniere's has subsided. So when Len called to say they had a new director, Chris Miller, he rejoined and has sung recently in both Harmonic Progression and Harmony Way. Mike's wife died of pancreatic cancer May 30, 1999, a grievous loss for Mike. Since then he spends time in a variety of ways, playing the piano and the organ that he has in his home. Keeping up his home and yard. Trying to entice his sons Brian and Michael to join BBS. Spending time with his six grandchildren. And drawing. Not many know of this life-long interest. When he was writing home from his army days he'd add a cartoon to each letter, like one of him sitting on the ship's latrine, just a long pipe that crossed the ship's deck, and the one shown here of a relieved soldier heading home. His daughter Gwen has carried on the family artistic interest, graduating from the Society of Arts and Crafts in Detroit.



MOVIE REVIEW. The new Hollywood movie, **Barbershop**, opens this week in neighborhood theaters. I've asked our Big Chief movie reviewer, Mr. Simpering Idiot, to write a review.

"Yah, well, thanks, editor-man. I thought this was gonna be pretty cool when I heard the lead actor's name was "Ice Cube." You know, ice is cool, and a cube has got 6 square sides – you can't fool old Sim, this is code for quartets – lots of quartets. So the movie opens and I see it takes place in this barbershop on the south side of Chicago. That's cool, Chicago's a bluesy musical place. But I get suspicious when I see there's seven barbers and a sharp cookie named Terri (and she is sharp! not flat, if you get my drift), but that's a strange way to do a barbershop octet, or even "dueling quartets." Well, I gotta tell yah, I like these guys but, as that little old lady in the beef ad said, "Show me the barbershop!"

Well, I cant deny it - I'm'plexed. So I read Roger Ebert's review, and he says "There is a kind of music to their conversations, now a lullaby, now a march, now a requiem, now hip-hop, and they play with each other like members of a an orchestra." Not a word about "barbershop." In a movie called Barbershop. Boy was I disappointed. You'd do a lot better to go see the current film at the IMAX Theater at the Detroit Science Center, "Jane Goodall's Wild Chimpanzees." If you've seen their ad, you know the picture of Jane and chimp is taken from last month's *Smoke Signals*. And that is Chimp-hooting at its barbershop best. Thanks, editor-man."

TECHNICAL SINGING. Jim DeBusman is SPEBSQSA's Music Specialist. Here's what he writes about **warm-up**.

The warm up session at the beginning of a quartet or a chorus rehearsal is the most important thing we do to prepare for the best possible musical experience before our rehearsals or performances. This warm up is not for the individual as much as it is for fine-tuning the ensemble's ears, minds, voices and bodies. Without a good warm up, we would never realize our full potential as a quality performing quartet or chorus.

Most of us have been involved in some type of athletic activity in our lives. If we did not want a ham-string pull or something more serious to happen, we warmed up before the athletic activity. Singing is a physical activity, not only involving a specific muscle, but our entire body when singing well.

In the warm up, we should activate the mind; physically prepare the body; remind the singer of the proper use of his vocal instrument; stress the importance of good breath support/management that produces warm air and incorporate exercises that reinforce techniques to help us sing as a foursome in good quality.

The warm up should consist of more than just humming a couple of scales and singing "Heart of my Heart" on a neutral vowel. The exercises chosen should have several common aspects, such as:

- * adhering to the fundamentals of good singing
- * selecting exercises that will give long term remedies for a specific concern
- * using exercises that will solve more than one objective
- * selecting exercises that the quartet or chorus needs to focus on to help them improve over the long haul

Each exercise should have a purpose (why are we doing this specific exercise), a frequency (how many repetitions should we do this exercise at each warm up session), and duration (how long will we need to do this exercise until has become a habit). We also have found that a periodic rotation of exercises is probably the best way to maintain interest. Using the Society's "Improving Vocal Techniques Through the Warm Up" manual (stock #4068) and the new "Basic Singing Skills for Barbershoppers" video (stock #4013) are both excellent resources for a variety of quality exercises to use as a part of your warm up.

Your quartet or the chorus's music team member in charge of the warm up should have both long and short-term goals for each exercise used. This allows each member of the quartet or chorus to better understand why each exercise is done in such a way. Also, through self-examination and critique, each singer will be able to determine his own progress in relation to his personal goals as a singer.

The key to a productive warm up session lies in your acceptance that they are an important part of you becoming a better ensemble. You should continue the practice of making certain you know why you are doing each exercise. Make each warm up session meaningful and a part of every rehearsal.

The Audiofile is a great new addition the Members Only section of the SPEBSQSA website. This is the index to a private collection of more than 12,000 vocal performances now available to barbershoppers. The songs cover nearly the entire century - heavy on early 20s to late 40s - and many are unobtainable from any other source.

Your first peek at the database is free. When you log on after that, you are expected to make a donation in any amount - honor system - to the Society's Harmony Foundation. (Hey, you were going to make one anyway, right?)

If you want copies of any performances listed here - and if the songs are in the public domain - we'll put them on a cassette or CD (no MP3s at present) and send them to you. For this service we ask for a further Foundation donation of \$10 per request for the first song and \$5 each for extra songs. We will provide all materials and postage.

If the song you want is protected by copyright, no copy can be made, of course. But we can probably tell you where to buy it. You may access the database by song title, artist or style. Roughly 5,000 performances are solos or duets, 4,500 are by vocal groups (three voices or more), 1,500 by barbershop groups and the rest by Broadway, comedy and cabaret people. Be advised that this collection is extremely skimpy on rock and rap.

Go ahead, browse a bit. It's fun. And, as the Old Dope Peddler said, "The first one's free." (from the Website)

Calendar

Sep 17	Mystery trip (6pm)
Sep 24	Chorus rehearsal
Sept 27-29	Bush League
Oct 1	Chorus rehearsal
Oct 8	Chorus rehearsal
Oct 15	Chorus rehearsal
Oct 18-20	District Convention – Battle Creek
Sat, Nov 9 (7:30pm eve)	Fall Show – Return to Oz – Clarkston H.S.
Jan 4-5	COTS, Okemos, MI
January 19-26, 2003	Midwinter Convention, Albuquerque, NM
Feb 22, 2003	Chorus Coaching Clinic, Lansing
April 25-27	District Convention – Lansing

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