



BIG CHIEF CHORUS
SMOKE
SIGNALS



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

Vol. 7, No. 9, (#81)

January 1, 2008

Christmas Chorus

The Pontiac-Waterford Big Chief Chorus has concluded another gig-filled Christmas season. During November and December, the barbershop chorus morphs into an all-comers Christmas chorus. Between December 4 and 22, armed with a repertoire of nine songs, half sacred, half secular, the chapter sang to 27 groups, including elder-care facilities, business groups, grocery stores, medical facilities, show sponsors' businesses, and the Holly Dickens Festival. Eighteen of these involved the whole chorus and in-house quartets whenever available – B-NATURAL, CELEBRATION, FOUR WHEEL DRIVE, ON TAP, LOCAL COLOR IV, and NORTHBOUND SOUND. The others were quartet gigs. We averaged 42 singers per chorus singout this year compared to 33 last year, illustrating the growth of the chorus under new director Tom Blue, and also the decision to welcome women singers to the holiday program.

A twenty-three-minute audio recording of the concert at Canterbury on the Lake is available on our web site, www.bigchiefchorus.org by clicking on the Holiday photo half way down the home page. At the chorus party following that concert, framed certificates were handed out to all participants, and the winners of annual

awards were announced. Barbershop-of-the-Year award went to outgoing president and FOUR WHEEL DRIVE bass, Zaven Melkonian. Fred McFadyen received the Rawley Hallman Music award, and he spoke emotionally of the joy of singing with a group whose main goal is to enjoy singing.

The chorus re-gathers at Crary Middle School January 8, 2008, under the leadership of President-elect Doc Mann, the new Executive Board, and director Tom Blue.

From the Prez:

My fellow songsters:

May I take this opportunity to welcome all of you, my fellow harmonizers and songsters, to a welcome return for the 2008 joyous musical season under the direction of our esteemed director and assistant directors.

Upon receiving the president's pin from our most outstanding and loved immediate past president, Zaven, I felt a pride and responsibility to provide the leadership of a chapter with a history of devoted presidents and their contributions.

I look forward to the extra effort and time that each and every one puts forth to help make our barbershopping a fun-filled learning experience. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to be your president for the coming year.

Doc Mann

AROUND THE PATCH

The profit on our **Fall Show** was announced as \$7662.

The Music Committee has chosen **music for the new year**. "Aura Lee" and "I'm Beginning to See the Light" are intended as our contest songs. The year's music will include fourteen new songs, and our fall show will have a patriotic theme.

Tenor **Al Monroe** was the soloist in his church's Christmas program, Dec 23.

Bari **Cory Flatoff** has returned from Hawker 800 school with a fresh type rating and an offer to become the Assistant Chief Pilot of ADI, which he gladly accepted. "I missed the entire Christmas Sing-Out program with great disappointment and hope to have more time next year with my new positions."

Tenor **Terry Jamison** became a victim of corporate down-sizing and is now job-hunting, including out of state. "If I can find a way to rehearsals I'll be there... At this time barbershopping is the only thing keeping me going."

The **Big Chief Chicks** met for lunch at Dobski's on Saturday, Dec. 22.

Notes on our Christmas singers.

Doug Metzger is the printer of our show program. He sang Lead with us, which seemed to him to fit. He hasn't sung in an organized group since seventh grade. He lives in West Bloomfield with his wife Lynne and sons Andy and Chris. "I am still waking up singing 'Little Toy Trains,' so I better come back to learn more songs. Thanks for a most memorable December."

Eric Domke sang Lead with us and intends to return in January, probably as a Bari. He has sung in high school and church choirs and would like to explore quartetting. He has been a "gas lineman catholic specialist" for 26 years with Consumers Energy, protecting gas lines from corroding. He lives in Waterford.

Jack Miesel has sung Lead with us for several Christmas seasons. He is heading off to Palm Harbor, FL for three months, but might join us when he returns. He is a psychotherapist in private practice, and also doing grief counseling with funeral homes.

Bill Maxfield sang Lead with us. The time was propitious since he just retired from EDS as a systems analyst. He lives in White Lake. He is new to organized singing but intends to return.

Pat Newkirk sang Lead in his third Christmas chorus and is thinking of upgrading to the full chorus. He is retired from GM Maintenance and lives in Waterford.

Austin Quinn is a cost analyst, retired from GM. Austin lives in Royal Oak and sings Lead with D.O.C (since 1981). He has an interest in the affect of singing song lyrics which have been converted from English language to a form of "stage language" known as phonetic transcription. "I have been very impressed with Tom Blue's demonstrated skills, the availability of a voice-part learning CD, and your sense of camaraderie. (If I can find a better driving route), I may continue to sing with the Pontiac-Waterford Chapter."

We were also joined for the first time by several women.

Donna Bevington we all know as our long-time show manager. She has just retired from Oakland County.

Eileen Marshall is Bob's wife and a long-time Sweet Adeline.

Sharon Lepley, Elaine Greene, and **Linda Parks** sing in various groups, including Church Street Singers.

Eileen Marshall adds:

"I want to thank the chorus and whoever was responsible for inviting women to sing during the Christmas season. I thoroughly enjoyed singing the Carols and traveling from venues to venue and to see people enjoying the live entertainment the chorus provided. The men were so gracious and accepting that I felt very welcome. I love singing those songs and Big Chief gave me an extra singing place. The reason I was so excited to sing with you is that my chorus, Spirit of Detroit, only had one Christmas sing-out and that was at the Rock Financial

Arena so we never sang for any real groups who actually wanted us. My director is only competition-oriented and I think that is a darn shame.

Thank you all.

Did I miss any Christmas singers?

One of our Christmas guests asked about the process for new singers. I wrote a **primer for new singers** in the October 2006 Smoke Signals.

You'll find it at:

http://www.bigchiefchorus.org/Smoke_Signals/2006/October%202006-Issue%2066.pdf

MEMBERSHIP (at 58) (from the finally updated BHS website)

Renewals: Bob Brain (3), Gil Schreiner (3), Doc Mann (8), Pete Mazzara (8), Jack Teuber (8), Zaven Melkonian (8), Tom Jackson (9), Bruce Brede (10), Neil Braun (18), John Northey (19), Bruce LaMarte (36), Bill Dabbs (37), Dick Johnson (38), Fred McFadyen (41), Marv Wilson (51), Len Barnes (52)

Pending: Bill Auquier, Ross Ensign, Lew Mahacek, Dave Monroe

Birthdays: Len Barnes (3rd), Tom Blue (7th), Bob Marshall (10th), Bob Butcher (25th)

Barbershopper of the Year – Zaven Melkonian

Medical: Lyle Howard injured his knee.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

The much-awaited Guardians of Harmony Christmas Extravaganza was held, Saturday, December 8 in St. Clair Shores Lakeview High School. Many BCCers were there. It featured their chorus, plus special guest Toronto Northern Lights Chorus, and several quartets, including POWER PLAY, SINGING WITH DAD, and NORTHBOUND SOUND (who replaced KEYNOTES on short notice), all of whom sang very well. Northern Lights came by bus and included many of their family members, which was quite special. It is a rare treat to hear the five-time International Silver Medalists. Particularly impressive was the combined singing of the two choruses, as if they had been practicing together weekly.

For a non-religious person, there was a rather heavy emphasis on devotional songs, and also perhaps a disproportionate number of ballads. The acoustics also seemed a bit thin, sitting half-way back and being bothered by a child's frequent outcries (at the matinee). Nevertheless, it was a great show and one that will be remembered.

Michael Baribeau is the new Troubadour Editor/Webmaster. The **online Troubadour** will be coming out shortly, with submissions from a number of Pioneer chapters, including Pontiac-Waterford. Stay tuned.

Ex-Troub editor **Joe Serwach** replaces Marvin Skupski as **Pioneer District Secretary**.

“**Al Fisk** has been asked to serve (and accepted) on the Music Category Board of Review! That's no small accomplishment, ladies and gentlemen, and I hope you will join me in extending a hearty Congratulations to Al. He will serve for at least the next 3 years and will have a great deal of impact on what happens in the Music category.” Mike O'Donnell, PRS & Lead - Harmony Transfer

Coming up Jan 5-6 is our Pioneer District **COTS**, Chapter Officers Training School, weekend, and it's not just for Chapter Officers! This is the first time that Pioneer has run the COTS weekend. The two special guests are Bruce Odell, teaching the class, "Singing for Barbershoppers" and our 2007 Pioneer District Quartet Champs "Chordiology". Registration was needed by Friday, December 28th. <http://www.pioneerdistrict.org/COTS/cots.htm>

Michael Slamka's new quartet, **CROSSROADS** (Jim Henry, Brandon Guyton, Fred Farrell, and Mike), has a weblink at: <http://www.crossroadsquartet.com/bio.html> They plan to compete in the CSD prelims in hopes of competing in Nashville next summer.

Windsor's Annual “**Uncle Sam Night**” will be held on January 18, at the Knights of Columbus Hall at 2401 Columbus Center, Windsor, Ontario. Held at the same place for the last 10 years. The bar opens at 7:30 with dinner at 8:30 PM.

Russ Seely was recently diagnosed with colon cancer and had surgery on Dec 10.

Jack W. Oonk passed away Dec 17 after a short illness. He was a member of the Holland Windmill Chorus, Bass for the "Harmaniacs" in the 50's and Baritone for the 1959 Pioneer District Champion quartet Chord Counts. They were also International reps in '58 and '59 and Finalists in '59.

Jack started a new program with the Chorus called "Doctors of Good Cheer" where the quartet dressed up like doctors and went to visit those who needed to be cheered up.

AROUND THE WORLD

Young Frankenstein is now on Broadway. “There is a scene where the Transylvanians Quartet’ sings a welcome song with the police character from the movie adding an extra note to a bell chord here and there.” (from Win Latham, on Harmonet)

Society Contest Audio Archive Goes Online

Now you can legally purchase barbershop performances from iTunes.

For more info, go to

http://www.barbershop.org/web/groups/public/documents/pages/nl_livewire_home.hcsp#P71_3624

which also includes general information on audio formats.

The Long and Short of Tall and Round Vowels

Tom Blue

A question was asked of me recently as to vowels and mouth positions. Sometimes we see some rather famous singers on TV (The Three Tenors or more recently Sissel) or other media and ask, “Why is it that sometimes their mouths are not as open as we would expect?” The answer is not a short one but I will try and make it more understandable.

In singing, there are four schools of singing technique, the English, the French, the German, and the Italian. It is not unusual for teachers of singing to adopt several positions or ideas from each of them, mainly those ideas that work with whomever they might be working with. So in the case of our singers on TV, it may be their training or lack thereof. In my case, I come from vocal coaching that was almost exclusively Italianate in approach. This required us to “sing as we speak.” The difficulty is that Italians speak more musically than most of us. This also causes me then to focus on the “ah” vowel which is tall and spacious and from there all other vocalizations or vowels stem.

There has also been some confusion as to my saying that vowels need to be “tall and round.” Please keep in mind that I mean for us to have a tall and spacious feeling on the “inside” of the mouth and not necessarily the distance between the upper and lower teeth in front. There needs to be a feeling of “placing the tone in the dome” as Ms. Armeling from MSU would have said. The roundness of vowels should come from the *lips as well as the space on the inside of the mouth*. The tall vowel is the “ah” and the round vowels are the “oo” and the “oh” with the “aw” vowel being a combination of tall and round. The “ee” vowel has to be produced through the lips of and “oo” vowel and then modified depending on how bright we want the sound.

And now a few ideas from Dr. Ken Phillips from an article in the magazine *Choral Director*, February/March 2007 entitled “A Philosophy of Vowel Production” that I shared with some of you at our last retreat.

- Vowels must be uniformly shaped in an “east-west” oval shaping of the lips.
- Vowels have deep set resonance.
 - ✓ a lowered larynx
 - ✓ an arched soft palate (“lifted” or the feeling of a sigh)
 - ✓ a relaxed tongue

✓ a relaxed jaw (free from tension)

- Vowels have forward placement (like that sound when humming or singing on an “n”).

The goal then is to put all of this together, and the result is a more formal sound that is in the “schooled” tradition. For us as members of the BCC, this gives us a starting point to begin putting into place a “unit” sound within each section and then applied to the whole group. So the “short” of it is to keep the vowels tall, round, and long.

Big Chief Jeopardy, #15 (Did you get these?)

1. Answer: His most challenging experience involved the Chrysler problems of 1979. He was responsible for negotiating Chrysler’s indirect costs on the M1/A1 tank contract. The resulting two-year negotiations included his flight to New York City to sign the agreement, pick up a check for \$11.9 million, and deposit it in a Cleveland bank. Question: Who is Bill Dabbs?
2. Answer: He windsurfs and sails on his Sunfishes, and plays lots of platform tennis in the winter. Question: Who is Jim Owens?

Big Chief Jeopardy, #16 (Try these.)

1. Question: He grew up in Canada, but since he had neither voted in Canadian elections nor “sworn allegiance to the King,” he had dual citizenship. He worked in refrigeration and boilers on a battleship, at Wesley Quaker Maid, Bendix Research Labs, Williams International, and Canterbury-On-The-Lake. (Issue #50)
2. Question: This duo includes one Lead who began singing karaoke at the Heart of the Lakes VFW post on Airport Road and his buddy who followed his Irish wife back to Ireland last year. (Issue #60)

A Journey through Time (Last segment)

By Lyle Howard

During the last segment we were taking a ten minute break about half way through the program. The bar was closed once again and the program resumed. (The bar was never left open during the active parts of the evening’s program.) Once again the quartetting, octetting, and whatever nonsense the M.C had dreamed up for the night continued. The hall was filled with music and laughter. No one ever felt embarrassed. Everyone had a good time. That is what it was all about.

While we were all having fun out front, Whitey was busy in the kitchen cooking up his Brats, Dogs and Dago Beans. Somebody would help him lay out

the paper plates, bowls, napkins, plastic ware, and condiments. When the night’s official program came to an end, everyone either lined up to eat, or they milled around talking and singing some more, waiting for a midnight time change. I’ll explain. For several years back in those days, chapters meeting on Friday nights waited till midnight to serve food containing meat to show respect for the Catholics in attendance. They were not allowed to eat meat on Friday nights. Some time in the mid decades of the last century the Pope saw fit to change the law, so to speak, and we began serving right at the end of the program. I always thought that was a good idea on the part of the Pope. Some members assigned the job of cooking chose not to serve meals containing meat, such as macaroni and cheese, salads, crackers and spreads, etc. After dining, most members and guests made their way to the door and home. However, in most cases we were never rushed to vacate the building, and some diehards hung around till maybe 1:00 am. The membership always saw to it that the pots and pans were washed, floor swept, chairs put away, tables stacked, thermostat adjusted, lights turned out and the door locked, to cap off another one night a month that would long be remembered.

I don’t want to leave you with the thought that choruses did not play a role in barbershopping in the early days. We always staged a chorus for shows and competition. Pontiac shows were known as “Parades of Quartets” each and every year. An example might be the “1957 Pontiac Parade of Quartets.” That’s how the program read. There was no need to devise a theme or script. Contracting an International finalist quartet, often the winners of the previous Gold, was first and foremost with our show committee. In addition, we generally hired one or two top-notch quartets, usually including one comedy group. They may or may not have been from the Pioneer District. Chapter quartets also got their moment in front of the lights on the first half of the show to sing anything they wanted from their repertoires. The first half usually closed with one of the better hired quartets. The International Finalists, of course, always closed the show.

The chorus opened every show with a couple of numbers, and closed every show much as we do now with another number, and then KTWWS after introductions of all the quartets. The chorus was most always directed by an in-house director. Bill Pascher directed for many years as did several others.

All show nights concluded with an afterglow, plus one or two more afterglows at various homes generally winding down with breakfast at somebody’s house at 6:00 a.m. And yes, the quartets hung around for most or all of these functions.

So, why did I take you on this little trip? You have a heritage. It’s my belief that most members today do not know from where this heritage comes. Oh, you may have heard comments about the old days and how good it was. But, I don’t really think you could fully understand what we were talking about. How could you understand that by the simple little idea that no two chapters met on the same night, or that no chapters would think of having a chorus rehearsal on meeting

night knowing there would be visitors coming from all over, or that this type of organization opened the doors wide for the formation of many more quartets than you find today. Need a tenor? So and So at Detroit # 1 is not in a quartet right now. Let's give him a call. That would be less likely to happen today because you don't even know So and So. You knew back then because you just talked to So and So at a meeting in Flint last week. There were far more quartets made up of members from different chapters than there are now. I know; I sang in probably no less than four of them. So, if we mention the good old days, you should by now have a little better idea what we are talking about. I've said it earlier and I'll repeat: the key to it all was that everybody knew everybody and that fact alone generated more fun and quartet opportunities.

At this point I had intended to get into the obvious question of why did it change? Frankly, I don't know why it changed. Those of us who were doing it the way I have described were perfectly happy with the way things were going. I think it best to end it here and leave that question for now. I hope you have enjoyed our little trip back in time. Feel free to approach me with any questions or comments.

I would like to take this brief opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the barbershoppers around the country who are taking positive steps to bring quartetting back to the forefront: the Brigades, quartet-only chapters such as Orange Ca. who have been going at it quite successfully for about twenty years now, chapters who have made a commitment to include quartetting in their meetings, such as Denver, San Francisco, and Walnut Creek, CA. There are others. Many of them utilize the fifth day approach. My hat is off to all of you.

Pandora

Pandora is a new music discovery service designed to help you enjoy music you already know, and to help you discover new music you'll love.

It's powered by the most comprehensive analysis of music ever undertaken, the Music Genome Project*, a crazy project started back in early 2000 to capture the complex musical DNA of songs using a large team of highly-trained musicians.

Just tell Pandora one of your favorite songs or artists and it will launch a streaming station to explore that part of the musical universe. For example, Pandora just added some 20,000 classical music titles to its array of offerings. Music begins to play through your speakers or computer headphones uninterrupted by commercials or distracting announcements of any kind, making it perfect for background in the home or office. You can leave it active in an otherwise unused window or tab of your browser and, if you ignore it, it shuts itself off after three hours (though it's simple to restart).

It's simple and free to sign up. Go to <http://www.pandora.com/>

* *"Together we set out to capture the essence of music at the most fundamental level. We ended up assembling literally hundreds of musical*

attributes or "genes" into a very large Music Genome. Taken together these genes capture the unique and magical musical identity of a song - everything from melody, harmony and rhythm, to instrumentation, orchestration, arrangement, lyrics, and of course the rich world of singing and vocal harmony. It's not about what a band looks like, or what genre they supposedly belong to, or about who buys their records - it's about what each individual song sounds like.

Since we started back in 2000, we've carefully listened to the songs of tens of thousands of different artists - ranging from popular to obscure - and analyzed the musical qualities of each song one attribute at a time. This work continues each and every day as we endeavor to include all the great new stuff coming out of studios, clubs and garages around the world.

It has been quite an adventure, you could say a little crazy - but now that we've created this extraordinary collection of music analysis, we think we can help be your guide as you explore your favorite parts of the music universe. "

More and more a cappella music is showing up on **YouTube**. As an example, click on this link to listen to a one-man, four-part tag for the Irish Blessing: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl8_c0GjP8&feature=related

Clash of the Choirs was a live four-night musical event on NBC the week of December 17, that at least exposed more Americans to choral singing. NBC tapped five musical superstars – Michael Bolton, Patti LaBelle, Nick Lachey, Destiny's Child singer Kelly Rowland, and country star Blake Shelton – to embark on a musical challenge as they returned to their hometowns (New Haven, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Houston, Oklahoma City) to assemble an amateur choir and prepare them to compete live in studio for the title of America's best choir. The show featured music genres ranging from current pop hits to holiday classics. The choir hopefuls were judged each night by viewers watching at home. This was a BBC Worldwide Production based on a series format acquired from Scandinavian based Friday TV.

Monday's two-hour "Clash of the Choirs" premiere showcased each of five celeb choirmasters as they put together 20-person choirs in their respective hometowns. Each is seen weeding through contenders and pretenders, "Idol"-style, though notably without the sarcasm and wisecracks of Simon Cowell because there are no judges here.

Each of the four episodes did better, with the final night having 8.3 million viewers; that's a lot of viewers! Nick Lachey's team won, earning a \$250,000 prize for a charity in Cincinnati.

"I was blown away at the teamwork and dedication of non-professionals and they could sing. I made my husband sit through the next three shows and we did not want it to end." – E.G.

Jim Owens' Oatmeal Muffin recipe:

I make these about 3 times a week. We like them for breakfast and frequently have one as an afternoon snack. They are fairly nutritious, inexpensive and are very filling (helps curb the appetite). I heat them for 10 seconds in the Microwave before eating them. The ingredients cost less than 15 cents per muffin. Each muffin: 120 Calories, 0 mg cholesterol.

OATMEAL MUFFINS

2 ½ c Quaker Quick Oats Cereal
¼ c Firmly packed brown sugar
¼ c Sliced almonds
¼ c Dried cranberries
1 ts Cinnamon
2 ts Baking Powder
2 Egg Whites, slightly beaten
¼ c Applesauce
¼ c Honey

1 c Skim or 2% low fat milk

Heat oven to 425 degrees. Line 12 medium muffin cups with paper baking cups or spray bottoms only with vegetable oil cooking spray. Combine dry ingredients. Add milk, egg whites, honey and applesauce; mix just until dry ingredients are moistened. Fill prepared muffin cups almost full; bake 15 to 17 minutes or until golden brown. 1 dozen

VARIATIONS: Have substituted the following:

¼ cup mashed banana, dried blueberries, raisens, currents, cherries, etc.
¼ cup crushed peacons, walnuts, cashews, etc.

Letters to the Editor

John,

(Your Canterbury concert) sounded fine. Thanks for producing it and for sending it out. I appreciate being on your mailing list.

Bill Kocher

John,

What a nice presentation of our chorus. Of course one can sit and pick out the flaws, but for our Christmas Holidays I think we did an excellent job. Thanks for all the hard work you put forth.

Some info you may want to pass along. There are some really good songs in here. <http://www.carlsonworld.net/tehilah/scores/SongList.asp>

Mike Frye.

John,

There appears to be some form of suspicious, white, powdery substance on the ground in a couple of those photos... The only white powdery substance I

have observed here is in the form of the aragonite sand that occasionally seems to follow us home from the beach.

Jim Troeger (in Florida)

*“full, low breath that fills the inner-tube
tall and round vowels
use of low, mid and head tone registers
the importance of the words
a face that knows you are singing
a unit sound within your section and within the group”
(Tom)*

All unattributed articles and photos by John Cowlshaw

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Director: Thomas Blue (248-814-9627)

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

President: Doc Mann (248-)

Past President: Zaven Melkonian

VP: Chapter Dev: Wayne Cheyne

VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm

VP: Marketing & PR: Jack Teuber

Secretary: Bob Butcher

Treasurer: Dar Johnson

Members at Large – Ron Clarke, Dave Myre, Gil Schreiner, David Shantz

Chorus Manager: Dave Myre

Music Team: Holm, Blue, Johnson, Doig, Ensign, McFadyen, Melkonian, Murray, and Prueter

CALENDAR

Jan 8, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Jan 15, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Jan 18, F, 7:30 pm	Windsor's Uncle Sam night
Jan 22, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Jan 29, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Feb 5, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Feb 12, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Feb 14, Th	Valentines Day – Sing-outs
Feb 16, Sa	Power Play Farewell Show
Feb 19, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Feb 26, T, 7pm	Chorus rehearsal, Crary
Apr 4-6, F-Su	Spring Retreat, McMullen Cntr
Apr 25-27	Pioneer District Convention – Battle Creek