International 2004, Loo-uh-vul

The Winners:
- Quartet – Gotcha! with 90.5 %.
- Chorus – Ambassadors of Harmony, St. Charles, MO, with 92.7 %.
- College Quartet – Vocal Spectrum, 84.3 %.

Pioneer Results:
- Quartet – Infinity, 42nd out of 52, with a fine 76.4 %.
- Chorus – Macomb Harmony Heritage, 21st out of 22, but with a great 73.1 %.
- College Quartet – The Extremes, 20th out of 22, with 59.9 %.

Congratulations to all the participants. It’s a tough competitive field out there!

Zaven Melkonian and I drove down to Louisville for the last two days of the 66th Annual International Convention and Contests, a.k.a. X-TREME LOUISVILLE! That was too late to hear the Swingle Singers, to do Music Education Day (with Master Classes by Power Play, or Bluegrass Student Union, or the Suntones) or to sit thru 53 qualifying quartets in the quarter-finals (Yikes, did anyone make it thru all 53? Did the judges?)

But we DID have a chance to:
- Attend the hour-long Vocal Majority Show, Friday night, a musical kaleidoscope of their 30-year history. Outstanding!
- Cheer the twenty-two competing choruses who sang from 10:45 am to 5pm on Saturday.
- Watch outstanding semi-final and finals of the quartet competition, as well as:
  - “Sing with the Champs,” in which each entrant displaces one member of a star quartet
  - Talk to the Finale music-software guru.
  - Shop for CD’s, pitchpipes, SPEBSQSA clothing, et al.

We didn’t attend the AIC show, the Dinner with the Champs, or the Chorditoria.

Without half trying, we ran into Pontiac/Waterford folk, Bill and Candy Nevaux with daughter Leslie from Alaska, Bill and Barbara Holmes, Jeff Spires, and Chuckles (and Jackie) Murray, and Wally Plosky. The latter three, of course, were there to sing with our Pioneer District representative chorus, the Macomb County Harmony Heritage. Bruce LaMarte was a 7th attending BCC member, present to sing with his quartet Infinity. We also bumped into Chuck and Linn Barrett, who had driven down from Madison.

The venue was not perfect. Headquarters was downtown, at the Galt Hotel, on the banks of the Ohio River. But competitions were at Freedom Hall, in the Kentucky Fair and Expo Center, about five miles south by the Louisville Airport. Buses tried to move some of the 8000 participants efficiently from venue to venue, but big delays were the rule.

We booked a motel between the two and drove easily back and forth.

Saturday morning we stopped at a McDonald’s for breakfast, several miles from either venue. I thought, now we’re in raw Louisville. Just then a man tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Do we have four parts yet?” (Badges hanging around the neck are the give-away.)

The chorus competition was won by the Ambassadors of Harmony, under Jim Henry’s direction. They sang “I Have Dreamed” and “New Ashmolean Band,” which Zav, but not I, knew, and which provided lots of opportunity for hi-jinks. They put a record 160 men on stage. (“Size does count!”) Second place went to Toronto’s Northern Lights with 51 men on stage (“Size isn’t everything!”) In the last eleven years, Ambassadors has been 4th four times, and 3rd five times. Director Jim Henry was a member of Gas House Gang, and their Associate Director is arranger David Wright.

On Friday, we had watched several choruses rehearse. Sitting ten feet in front of the rehearsing choruses is different than watching the TV monitors in the second balcony of the 14,000 seat Freedom Hall, and we felt Toronto’s in-your-face intensity, as they sang two message songs, “Brother can you spare a dime?” and another about a returning soldier. None of us could sing in the same old lackadaisical way if we were surrounded by those folk. Dr. Greg Lyne was there to coach them, trying to wring another percentage point or two out of an already stellar performance. We were so impressed at the rehearsal of the Houston...
The crowd cheered lustily as Power Play sang four numbers as outgoing champions. Then the 2004 results were announced. Gotcha! deserved the “!” at the end of their name; they were outstanding. Last year they were second to Power Play; so this year they received their medals from Power Play, several leaping bodily onto the Slamkas in their excitement over winning. Ask Zaven about their songs in the finals (Hint: you won’t have to leave your Polecat repertoire.) We’re told that their breadth of talent includes the fact that all four have qualified with AHSOW on all four parts.

MaxQ was great (88.7%) and the only possible challenge to Gotcha! The individual members (Greg Clancy, Tony De Rosa, Gary Lewis, and Jeff Oxley) have lots of medals, but as MaxQ, they are new and haven’t paid their dues yet. Riptide, Metropolis, and Saturday Evening Post finished out the top five medallist positions.

The college quartet competition deserves special mention. Vocal Spectrum scored 84.3%, an astounding score that was nine percentage points above the 2nd place college quartet. In fact they would have placed 5th in the whole international quartet competition. They are all students at Lindenwood University, where Jim Henry teaches, and sing in the Ambassadors of Harmony chorus. (In fact three quartets were on stage from AoH.)

If you weren’t in Louisville, you were probably listening on webcast. Fortunately, by the opening of Saturday evening, the webcast program had received $68,000 from almost 1400 donors. That will keep the webcast going next year, when the International is in Salt Lake City and harder to attend.

If you’ve never been to an International, vow to go. To be there with 8000 other barbershop musicians is an incredible experience. Zav was wavering a month ago; now he is so glad he went, (despite having to deal with a case of shingles).

AROUND THE PATCH

Bill Pascher has been joining our practices in June. He is looking more fit than ever, and directed us in a second performance at Sunrise on June 29:

(From Zaven Melkonian) “On June 29th, thirty members of the BCC gathered at The Sunrise Assisted Living Of Clarkston to sing for the residents. We were there at the invitation of our own Bill Pascher, who is now living there. After a thirty-five minute warm-up outside on the large patio, we were ushered inside where, with Bill acting as our MC and first of three (actually four) directors, we opened the program with “My Wild Irish Rose.” Bill then introduced the second number, “Kitty, Kitty,” under the direction of (who else?) Bruce Brede. The rest of the program consisted of a two-song set that opened with “Hi Neighbor” directed by Dick Johnson followed by a five-song set, featuring our two contest numbers, directed by Jim Troeger. The program was well received by an appreciative audience. We had a well-attended afterglow at Mr. B’s, where Jim directed us on stage, as we sang “Darkness On The Delta”
and “Ain’t Misbehavin’.” We then entertained the patrons in the outside dining area with our two contest songs, plus “Heart Of My Heart” for a very special couple. All in all, it was a great evening fun and fellowship.”

Bruce Brede has agreed to be Lead Section Co-Leader. John Cowlishaw formed a new quartet to sing at his niece’s wedding in Manistee June 19 – John, son Phil, sister Barbara, and ex-wife Myra. They sang John and Phil’s arrangement of Nat King Cole’s song, L.O.V.E. (‘L’ is for the way you look a me…”

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Bob Winters, President, Saginaw/Bay Chapter, gave a warm report on the outcome of the Saginaw/Bay Harbor Sounds Chorus and Tri-City Sweet Adelines Chorus concert June 2. “Everyone attending agreed it was a fantastic show and it was the biggest crowd we’ve ever had. The featured quartets were Power Play, Motor City Mix, and Insignia. Insignia (the high school kids from Farmington Hills) wowed the crowd. These young men are good and getting better. The Grand Masters of the show, however, were the Slamkases. Power Play received at least 3 standing ovations during their performance and another one when they invited Insignia to come up and sing “Side By Side” with them. What made this concert unique was that Power Play agreed to do it if Saginaw/Bay would make every effort to get young people to attend the concert.

I personally visited eight high schools and met the vocal music teacher and vocal students. In all cases, I was warmly greeted and showed the “Singing is Life” video and played Power Play’s rendition of “Operator” for them while talking up the concert. The teachers all seemed genuinely interested in what we were doing.”

How about someone from Pontiac-Waterford getting involved at the next higher level? Al Bonney writes: “As we go into the planning cycle for 2005, we are faced with some opportunities for new men on the District Management Team. It has been some time since we turned over any positions and it is a very exciting time for us as we consider the bright new ideas and visions that new men always bring to our group.

Greg Humbel from Huron Valley has been the Marketing and PR guy for three years.

John Szewc from Macomb County has been our Events guy for two years. Al Bonney from Traverse City has been our Financial Development guy for this first year of the position.

As chairman of the nominating committee I have lots of additional information available on each of these three jobs and would love to send you a job description if you think you might want to be considered for any of these jobs.”

AROUND THE WORLD

Not only did the Pistons win the NBA championship, but also the first Pistons-Lakers game featured Dick Van Dyke’s a capella quartet Vantastix singing the National Anthem. Van Dyke is an honorary member of the Society (Anaheim, 1999).

The Gas House Gang has decided to hang it up. Rob Henry died in September, 2003 and the remaining members (Jim Henry, Kipp Buckner, Rich Knight) will keep their show commitments through 2005 with the help of guest baritones that have included Mike Slamka, Tony DeRosa, D.J. Hiner, Jonny Moroni, and Kevin Keller. They began seventeen years ago, singing “Lida Rose,” in Alton, Illinois, and have sung in 49 states and 13 countries; they have produced five recordings, and they won the International Championship in 1993. More at http://www.gashousegang.com/main.php.

Michigan Jake is also hanging it up. (They have just announced the release of their second recording, How Rhythm was Born with several David Wright arrangements.) They have only been singing together for nine years, but coast-to-coast living has made the entire quartet experience a challenge. “Our Louisville AIC show performance will be our last as an active quartet—quite fitting as this is exactly the city where we sang our first chords together as members of the Louisville Times Chorus in 1995.”

Dr. Val Hicks died in Salt Lake City this month. His arrangements are well known to us – “Do Lord/This Little Light of Mine,” “I Love That Old Barbershop Style,” and “Star Spangled Banner.” Those unfamiliar with his life may want to read a brief story on him that appeared in The Harmonizer a few years ago – "The paths of three legendary arrangers -- Perry, Latzko, Hicks" – available online at http://www.spebsqsa.org/ID_047493 Lou Perry has also died.

The American Film Institute (AFI) has released its list of the Top 100 Movie Songs of All Time. Not surprisingly, a large number of the songs have made their way into the barbershop world! The Top 10 include: Over the Rainbow, As Time Goes By, Singin’ in the Rain, Moon River, White Christmas, Mrs. Robinson, When You Wish Upon A Star, The Way We Were, Stayin’ Alive, The Sound of Music.

The entire list is at: http://www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/songs.aspx

A lot of controversy out there on the “nets.” One has to do with our name. President Rob Hopkins’ message to chapters informed us that Kenosha would consider changes to our name this year at International. “That event may be a defining moment for this Society, a time for us to see ourselves with new eyes. Today, much of the world sees us not at all, or through a sepia-colored glass that shows them only what we were once in an imagined past, not as a future-looking
group of committed singers. However, we must change if we are to grow and flourish in a bright and prosperous future.” You can imagine how the KIBBERS (“keep it barbershop”) responded to that! It’s now a done deal. We are the Barber Shop Harmony Society.

Another has to do with the style of music sung. “Conservatives” in our Society give BarberTrash Awards for those who deviate too far from the “barbershop style.” Burt Szabo is one of the conservatives. See his website at http://www.choralconcepts.com/ Two nominations for BarberTrash at Louisville have already been posted: “I've Got You Under My Skin” and ”Hit That Jive Jack.”

On the other hand, five of Gotcha!’s six Louisville songs were written before 1915, albeit in powerful new arrangements. And Grady Kerr says that their “Jefferson Lord, Play That Barbershop Chord” was originally performed by The American Quartet and was a hit in 1910, and is reported to be the very FIRST appearance of the term ‘barbershop’ describing our style.

A third has to do with religious music. Saturday night’s Mike Testers, 12th Street Rag, sang an openly evangelical Christian Gospel song. Mike Testers are out of the competition; their role is to allow the judges to fine-tune the microphones, and I’m sure that their song allowed that. On the other hand it made me uncomfortable as well as some avowed Christians who wrote in to Harmonet about it. I liked John Wittmer’s summary: "On a practical, chorus by chorus by quartet by quartet basis, our Society has worked out what seems to be a good compromise. We are urged by our code of ethics to avoid religious discussion as disruptive and yet many members want to include some of the wonderful religious music in our repertoires. Our individual chapters and quartets represent a wide diversity of religious preference and each performs the music that is acceptable for their members and their audiences. When different preferences as to religious songs arise in a chapter or a quartet, they wisely give a nod to our ethical statements and cease such discussions. Thus as a practical matter we have choruses that never perform such music while at the same time quartets from the same chapters perform spiritual music for their own audiences. Everyone seems to benefit.” 12th Street Rag violated that compromise.

Missing Members:

When I look at our membership directories from 2001-2004, I see a number of members who are no longer with us, or whom we rarely see. Where are they now?

Don Sheridan. Don is still a member but hasn’t visited the chorus since the evening Gil Jackson directed. Standing is difficult for Don now due to pain and numbness from a bad neuropathy in his legs. He hates to let his membership lapse, after 43 years in barbershop (he was a member of the Dearborn Chordamatics in 1963 when they were 10th place chorus in Toronto) but it may come to that. For thirty years he sang in a quartet, two of whose members have died, and songs which they sang, like “I Feel a Song Coming On” and “Over the Rainbow” are emotionally tough for him to sing now in a chorus. He still works part-time in a pharmacy, and he is also active as an officer in the Knights of Columbus, which meets on Tuesday nights.

Jerry Two mey (who gave this bulletin its name, Smoke Signals) sang for a while with the Livingston BBS chorus, but has now let his SPEBSQSA membership lapse. He still sings in a gospel group out of a church in Highland.

Ron Arnold sang for a while with Huron Valley. He’s now a Frank Thorne member, and sings lead in Impresario. He still lives in Milford.

Bill Auquier has worked conflicts for a long while, but showed up in June at Canterbury.

Jack Cavalier was so interested in our chorus that he asked specially for Smoke Signals to be mailed to him during his half-years in Florida. He also sang in Florida for a while.

Jerry Howington is still a Big Chief Chorus member, and sings Tenor in Impresario.

Bruce LaMarte is still a Big Chief Chorus member, and sings Tenor in Infirmitly, which competed at Louisville.

Yong McDowell has moved his membership from Pontiac-Waterford to Frank Thorne, coincident with his move to Pittsfield Township to be closer to Ann Arbor dancing.

Al and Gari Monroe moved to the Jackson area. Al is a Pharmacy Tech at the U of M Hospital, and sings with the Huron Valley chorus as well as continuing to sing Tenor in Four Wheel Drive.

Wally Plosky has just returned from working in Jacksonville FL. There, he joined the First Coast Metro chorus, whose plans to tour Russia this August have been cancelled. Wally still maintains his membership in DOC and Macomb County choruses, and sings Lead in Four Wheel Drive.

Marv Wilson is still dual member in DOC and Pontiac/Waterford and until recently sang Tenor in Today's Special.

Chuck Barrett and wife Linn moved to Middleton, WI. Chuck sings with the Madison chapter and is Tenor in a new quartet called The Generation Gap.

Dave Willett began free-lancing as an Aviation Mechanic two years ago, whose long hours have prevented him from maintaining his involvement in Pontiac/Waterford chorus, but he hopes to return.

Andy Vinstra couldn’t do justice to two hobbies, and his passion for poetry (his email address is andypoet@msn.com) led him to leave the chorus. He still thinks about us and was stunned with a sense of loss over Chris's death. He has now moved to Davisburg and works in the family construction business. He'll have a poem published in Rattle in December and has been working for the past year on a book of poetry.

Jan Graham has moved to the Flint area and is working out of Sterling Heights and traveling a lot. He expects to move back into the Waterford area toward the end of 2004 and rejoin us; in the meantime, he might sing with Flint and wants to advertise our Fall show in his area.
Dan Atkinson had job changes and a newborn baby Ben, and he hopes to return someday soon.

I believe that Don Carrier’s health, and Russ Parry’s job have limited their involvement. Stan Mersino continues to be supportive by membership; Joe Voynar’s has lapsed.

And these four members, In Memoriam:

Bob Woodward
Don Denoyer
Chris Miller
John Smith

MEMBERSHIP (at 56)
Renewals: Doc Mann (5), Art Ripley (7), Dan Valko (15), Bill Dabbs (34)
Birthdays: July Tom Jackson (1st), Chuck Murray (6th), Bert Cederleaf (21st), Art Ripley (27th)
BSOM – June – Art Carinci, a.k.a. Frank Sinatra, for his work as Chorus Manager

From the Prez:
For our Fall Show we have:
Name - “The BCC Presents Family”
Guest Quartets: Insignia, Musicality, & Infinity.
Guest Chorus: Clarkston High School Barbershop Chorus
BCC Quartets & Ensemble: TBD
Location: CHS Auditorium
Date: November 06, 2004
Time: 7:30PM (but get there early for good seats)
Ticket Price: $15
Chairmen:
Script – Jeff Doig
Tickets – Jim Owens
Cast Party – Bruce Brede

From the Director
I am pleased to inform you that we now have TWO website addresses that you can type into your browser. The URL that you have had for several years is still active and can be found by typing www.pontiacchapter.com into your browser address bar. As of today, we also have a new URL that is similar to what 90%+ of the choruses with websites have done. The new address is www.bigchiefchorus.org and it will take you to the same web site that the former address took you to. The pontiacchapter.com address expires in ~10 months and the bigchiefchorus.org address will be good for one year from today. At a later point in time, the Executive Board will discuss whether the chorus will continue to keep both names registered, or if we will drop one of the two. If you have thoughts on the matter, please make sure to direct your comments to either myself, or a member of the Executive Board.

It is also important to remember that this is YOUR web site. Please use it, refer people to it, and make suggestions regarding it. We can make a website a very valuable and useful tool if it is used to its potential… check it out often and share your thoughts and ideas!

MINUTES, EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS, Bill Holmes
Excerpts, June 10, 2004
Treasurer, Dick Johnson, gave the financial report; current balance is $4,822.71.

Vice President of Chapter Development, Jim Owens, reported that a draft of the Membership Plan is being prepared which is expected to be ready at the next Board meeting. Also his team is planning for a distribution of material that would contain BBC information describing our chapter and chorus and activities.

Zaven Melkonian represented the Music team and conveyed the team’s recommendation that the chapter enter the fall contest, Saturday, October 16, 2004 in Kalamazoo, MI. Unanimous approval by the Board. Coaching dates set for Linda Liddicoat (1) and Al Fisk (4).

Vice President of Public Relations, Walt DeNio, reported his team is working on a plan containing guidelines for handling requests for sing-outs or gigs.

The Board reached a consensus that our mall sing-out be on Dec 19 even though our “last” Canterbury sing-out will be Dec 14.

Anyone wanting copies of our current tri-folder explaining the chapter & chorus to non-members can secure them from Jim Owens.

Discussion arose regarding what channels or action is available to a member who may not be happy with the direction or the decisions made by the Board. The Board invites any BCC members who have concerns regarding our chapter’s direction to channel those concerns at an Executive Board Meeting. Please contact Pete, in advance, to be added to the agenda. The Board is willing to meet on a night other than Thursday if necessary.

Gene Downie, Show Chairman. The theme of the show will be “FAMILY.” Three quartets have confirmed their participation, Infinity, Musicality, and Insignia, as has The Clarkston High School group.

Our director, Jim Troeger reported the Big Chief Chorus name has been updated on the web site at www.bigchiefchorus.org

Pete proposed that a golf outing might have numerous benefits, such as fellowship, fun, and opportunity to invite guests to golf who could be prospective members. Art Carinci and Mike Frye are working on this.

As a result of the BCC attending October Contest, we will not have the Mystery Bus Trip this year. The BCC hopes to visit Flint and Rochester chapters in the near future, to return the plaques they earned at our Woodshed Contest, the date-to-be-determined.
CHAPTER LEADERSHIP (2004)
Director: Jim Troeger
   (248-853-4360)
Assc. Directors: Dick Johnson, Bruce Collins
President: Pete Mazzara
   (313-563-4026)
Past President: Gene Downie
VP: Chapter Dev: Jim Owens
VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm
VP: Marketing & PR: Walt DeNio
Secretary: Bill Holmes
Treasurer: Dick Johnson
Members at Large: Jack Teuber, Zaven Melkonian
Chorus Manager: Art Carinci
Music Team: Roger Holm, Johnson, Collins, Doig, Ensign, Melkonian, Prueter
Bulletin Editor: John Cowlishaw
Music Librarian: Ted Prueter
Singing Valentines: Wayne Cheyne
Sunshine (Chaplain): Bill Dabbs
Uniforms Manager: Ron Clarke
Tape/CD Librarian: Ross Ensign
YMIH: Jack Teuber

Calendar
July 6, T  Rehearsal, at Canterbury
July 8, Th  Exec Bd, Roger Holm’s
July 13, T  Rehearsal, at Canterbury
July 20, T  Rehearsal, at Canterbury (Christmas in July)
July 27, T  Rehearsal, at Canterbury, Al Fisk, Coaching
Aug 1-8  Harmony College, St. Joseph, MO
Aug 3, T  Rehearsal, at Canterbury
Aug 20, F  Picnic, Tom Ford’s house
Nov 6, Sa  Fall show