



  
**BIG CHIEF CHORUS**  
**SMOKE**  
**SIGNALS**

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

Bulletin #31, November 4, 2003

**THE BIG CHIEF CHORUS REMEMBERS**  
**“THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW”**  
**(...but our memory isn’t very good!)**

It’s show time! I know some of us are having a hard time following the story line, but it’s a pretty straightforward script as far as I can recall (though my memory isn’t very good). We open with the Beedles flying Delta to America, while singing “Darkness in the Delta” with the June Taylor dancers. Then the MC introduces Jackie Gleason who rushes in from coaching his football team’s playoff game, and he’s just nuts about commercials, beginning with that Chardonnay ad that we love to yak about, at the end of which we cleverly take “swallows in the air” before throwing the glasses behind us. Emmett Kelly reprises CHORDIAC ARREST’s “Heart of a Clown,” before being shot out of a Volkswagen, thus requiring cardiac surgery from the Ajax medical team. Then Elvis arrives, but his pants split, as the chorus sings, “Shine on, harvest moon.” We are so amused that we follow with “New Yuck, New Yuck.” Then Aura Lee sings Something, I don’t remember what, while applying Brylcream to her “golden hair.” Let’s see, what’s next? Oh, yah, the Coca Cola and Faygo quartets duel it out. Then Frank Sinatra comes on stage to moan about “Old St. Louie.” We conclude with “Back in the Old Latrine.” Now is that so hard, guys? Come on, come through, New Yuck, it’s up to you!

**AROUND THE PATCH**  
**MEMBERSHIP (at 56)**

**Renewals:** Chris Miller (27)

**Birthdays: November:** Ron Clarke (8<sup>th</sup>), Doc Mann (13<sup>th</sup>), Marv Wilson (19<sup>th</sup>), Jerry Howington (23<sup>rd</sup>), Lew Mahacek (25<sup>th</sup>),

**BSOM – October –** Mike Keith and Lew Mahacek

**Illnesses:** John Smith is at home after cancer surgery and pain management.

Our Christmas season begins on November 11 with rehearsals at Crary School. Get those signs out!

**BCC Executive Board Election Results FY 2004:**

President:	Pete Mazzara
Secretary:	Bill Holmes
Treasurer:	Dick Johnson
VP Chapter Development & Membership:	Jim Owens
VP Music & Performance:	Roger Holm
VP Marketing & PR:	Walt DeNio
Members @ Large	Zaven Melkonian, Jack Teuber

**AROUND THE DISTRICT**

Congratulation to the first three choruses at the Pioneer District Fall Convention, in Battle Creek, October 18, with BCC members and ex-members in all three of them (Wally Plosky, Chuck Murray, Jeff Spires, Yong McDowell, Zaven Melkonian, Al Monroe, and Ron Arnold). Macomb County’s HARMONY HERITAGE CHORUS won it all, with D.O.C. taking second, and HURON VALLEY in third.

Furthermore, Bruce LaMarte’s newly constituted quartet, INFINITY, won the quartet contest, scoring 73.3%. B NATURAL was not able to compete due to Smitty’s illness.

**MEET Walt DeNio**

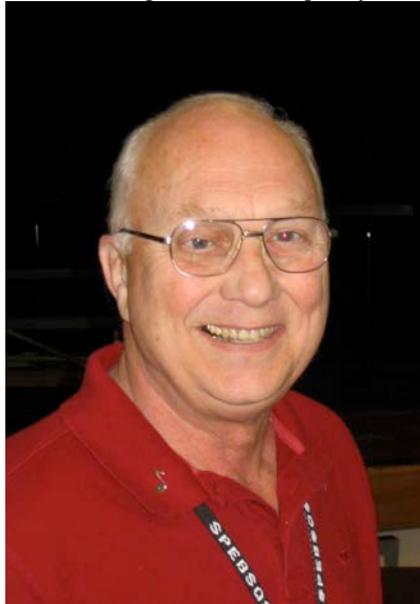
Walt DeNio was born and raised in Pontiac, just north of Telegraph Rd and Huron St. Thus, he schooled at Webster Elementary, Washington Jr High, and Pontiac High School, graduating in 1951. He got into music early, playing the trombone, rising to 1<sup>st</sup> chair by Jr High School band, and even considering a career in music. But athletics dislodged that. In track and field, he did the high jump and high hurdles, and he swam the 200-yd individual medley.

Walt’s father managed CF Smith Grocery Store for a while, before working at General Motors and Ford. His mom was a housewife. He had an older sister, and a younger brother, Larry.

Walt went to Michigan State (College, at that time) and joined mandatory ROTC. When he couldn’t switch from Army ROTC to Air Force ROTC in his

junior year, he quit and joined the Air Force Reserve. After Aviation cadet school in Chanute, IL, he flew single engine jets and then settled into a career as a helicopter pilot, (1954-1964), flying the Bell H-13 Grasshopper, the Sikorsky H-19, and the H-21 that carried 21 in troop transport. His stint overlapped Korea and Vietnam, but was spent stateside.

As a new officer, he could suddenly afford to buy a sparkling Ford convertible. When he got reassigned to Elmendorf Air Force base in Anchorage, Alaska, he drove there, along the AICan Highway. After four years in Alaska, he



was transferred to Duluth where he spent three years. As Base Housing Officer, he had some freedom; and with a fellow church member (who worked for Texaco, ironically), they bought and managed a motel/restaurant, and he resigned from the Air Force. When he grew weary of that, he sold his share and returned to Pontiac, where he worked for GM Truck and Bus for the next 26 \_ years. He was in Material Control, and the last 3 \_ years in Value Management, retiring in 1992.

Younger brother Larry had always looked up to his pilot brother, so upon Walt's return to Pontiac, they bought a C-140 taildragger together, in which Walt got his civilian ticket, and then instructed Larry. At one time Walt even ran a small aviation business, selling aircraft cleaning products at airports that he visited. The brothers went on to co-own a C-177 Cardinal and a C-182 Skylane, which was sold about 15 years ago after Larry's move out east. Walt lost his eye in an auto accident in 1972, but got his medical back after a year. Now, as Walt says, "I still stay current in my dreams."

Walt's marriage had broken up in Duluth, and he raised his two kids, Mike and Elaine, as a single parent for eight years. He met Janice on a double date, in which they all flew to Marshall's Win Shulers for dinner. On their 2<sup>nd</sup> date they flew to Bay City Brown airport for banana splits, and their 3<sup>rd</sup> date was to Mackinaw Island.

Walt became quite close to Janice's son Michael. He developed a real love of fly-fishing with him, but, unfortunately, Michael died in an auto accident in 1993.

Besides fishing, Walt enjoys golf and racquetball, and has also been a woodcarver, and a guitarist for a while, both initiated by his wife's efforts to enrich their camping out.

Walt has always enjoyed singing. Seven years ago, Roger Holm invited him to guest night. (Bruce Brede started that night too.) The chorus was down to a dozen and he might not have continued except for Roger's persistence. Also Chris had just come on board, and his encouragement of pickup quartets and tags helped keep Walt's interest. He could read music but was struggling in trying to find the right part for himself, and in understanding what Barbershop was all about. He finally settled on Baritone, despite its being such a hard part. He has struggled learning to sing head tones, instead of being too guttural (which leaves him tired).

The second year, Roger asked him to take over as Chapter Development Officer from Len Barnes. He tried to set goals each year, and the chorus grew, eventually to 63 members. But it is a "continual struggle to keep ahead of losses. Christmas singouts worked well, guest nights not so productive."

His first quartet, the CHIEF TONES (with Gene Downey, Bill Holmes, and Don Denoyer) broke up after Don's death. The Chief Tones sang in several shows, but that always made Walt very nervous.

Now he is in LOCAL COLOR, with Doc Mann, Fred DeVries, and Tom Ford. Their first aim was to qualify in all the polecats. They try to practice several hours each week, and they are now ready to expand their repertoire beyond polecats and chorus show tunes.

What does he most enjoy about Barbershop? He was asked that question for last week's article in the Eccentric, and answered, "the camaraderie," but upon reflection changes that to "ring a chord."

**FOUR WHEEL DRIVE** sang at a birthday party at Wyndgate Golf Course (Rochester) October 25. Spry 80-yr-old Charlie joined us in "Shine On, Harvest Moon." (We'd only learned the chorus, and he filled in the verse.) As the story goes, Wally Plosky almost didn't make it make due to an flight delay in Florida. After the plane had returned to the gate for an hour, Wally asked the flight attendant what the problem was. "Oh, the pilot didn't like the sound of the engine, and it took us an hour to find another pilot."

## Calendar

Nov 3, Mon Dress Rehearsal, Clarkston High School  
Nov 4, Tue BCC Rehearsal, Crary  
Nov 6, Th BCC Rehearsal  
Nov 8, Sat, 7:30 BCC Fall Show, Clarkston High School  
10:30 Cast Party / Afterglow  
Nov 11 Christmas season begins  
Nov 13 Exec Bd Meeting  
Dec 23 No rehearsal  
Dec 30 No rehearsal  
Jan 3-4 COTS, Lansing  
Jan 16 Fri Uncle Sam Night, Windsor Host, 7:30pm  
Jan 25-Feb 1 Midwinter Convention, Biloxi  
Feb 13-14 Fri-Sat Valentine's Day Sing Outs  
Mar 26-8, 2004 Spring Singing Retreat, MacMullan  
Apr 2 Fri 48th Annual Woodshed Contest @ 7:30pm, Pontiac CC, BCC  
Host  
Apr 23-25 District Spring Convention, Gaylord  
May 14-16 Fri-Sun Harmony Round Up, @ MSU  
June 27-July 4 International Convention, Louisville, KY

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## **Chapter Executive Board**

### **Officers:**

Interim Chorus Director: Bruce Collins  
(248-666-9147)  
President: Pete Mazzara  
(313-563-4026)  
Immed. Past President: Gene Downie  
Chapter Dev: Doc Mann  
Music and Performance: John Smith  
Program: John Smith  
Secretary: Jeff Doig  
Treasurer: Dick Johnson  
Members at Large: Chuck Murray,  
Zaven Melkonian

### **Chairmen:**

Associate Directors: Dick Johnson,  
Bulletin Editor: John Cowlshaw  
Chorus Manager: Art Carinci  
Grants: Dick Johnson  
Historian: (open) JC's bulletins  
Music Librarian: Bill Holmes  
Picnic: Gayle Mohler  
Pole Cats: Zaven Melkonian  
Quartet Activity: Bruce Brede  
Service (Charity): open  
Singing Valentines: Wayne Cheyne/  
Gene Downie  
Sunshine (Chaplain): Bill Dabbs  
Tagmeister: Mike Frye  
Uniform Manager: Ron Clarke  
Woodshedding: Len Barnes