

# The Bulletune



Monthly Publication of The Mall City Barbershop Chorus  
.. a chapter of SPEBSQSA

*Keep the Whole World Singing!*

Dan Crampton, Editor      The Mall City Chorus meets Tuesday Evenings at 7:00 p.m. at the Wesley Foundation on the WMU Campus

**April 2000**

**AL'S Gentlemen...** A few points to  
**Q** ponder as we get ready for contest. First  
**U** of all, the contest retreat was an  
**I** astounding success. According to Gene,  
**T** our performance of the contest songs is  
**I** getting stronger with each run through  
**E** and we will be the best when we hit the  
**S** tage in Battle Creek. Remember to do  
15-30 minutes of personal practice per day  
on your part.

Second, please remember that May is  
Membership Drive month; but you can  
invite anyone anytime, not just in May. We  
will have a special visitor, Patrick Kelly,  
who is a membership specialist. Perhaps he  
will enlighten us as to how we can reach our  
Chapter goal of 24 new members this year.  
(Only 23 to go guys!)

Finally, your Music Team and I are already  
working on next years agenda...i.e., Singing  
Valentines, and our annual show: A 60<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary Reunion. Please feel free to  
contact me or Brian Hall if you have any  
good ideas to share. Your input is  
important.....

*Al Grieser, your chapter President*

## Notes From the Director

*(Regarding the contest retreat on 4/1)*

First of all, thanks to all that showed up for  
the day!

I, and the rest of the chorus, appreciate the  
extra effort that you are taking to get better.  
It was a very good day! The unit sound was  
very good and we even got into the meat of  
the songs for the first time. I do have to tell  
you though, I was tired when we finished.  
Thanks for the workout! Those of you that  
were not there, **YOU HAVE A LONG ROW  
TO HOE!**

I am confident that our performance of these  
two songs is getting stronger with every run  
through. When the spring performance in  
Battle Creek comes along, that will be the  
best that we have been to date! What are  
some of your thoughts? Let us all know!

You do count. Speak up!

C YA!

Gene

*Editor's note: The above director's comments were not  
written specifically for the newsletter, but were in the form of  
an e-mail to chorus members following the April 1 contest  
retreat. They seemed very timely just 4 weeks before contest,  
and I used them here so that all chorus members could read  
them.*

## April 1, 2000 Contest Retreat

Gene started the day by asking chorus members what they wanted to accomplish and focus on during the day. The following list emerged during the discussion. Next, Gene listed 3 of his goals for the day.

### Chorus member goals

1. More energy
2. Focus
3. Beyond words and music
4. Selling the song
5. Believe the song
6. Have fun
7. Singing posture
8. Sharpen our ears/in-tune
9. Solidify startings and endings
10. Total performance
11. Be into performance at all times
12. Grab and hold audience
13. Message – convey it
14. Got to sell myself
15. Sell my self
16. Confidence
17. Keep an eye on Gene
18. Take charge of your space
19. More unit sound
20. Continuity in visuals
21. More uniformity
22. We need to open up
23. Mirror – feedback
24. Attitude
25. Allow our selves to blossom
26. We got to let go
27. Just sing
28. Sing the song all the way through
29. Perform on all portions
30. Work-time and performance-time
31. Learn to do better
32. Socialize and singing
33. Improvement and self-confidence
34. Enjoy singing
35. Learn to sing better and as a unit
36. Retain

### Gene's goals for the chorus

1. Enjoy the experience of singing well
2. Allow yourself to sing from the heart
3. Be able to do all that together



## *Hello Gentlemen!*

We are planning to do a special guest month in May; very similar to the one we did last year. However, as Gene has pointed out, and I agree, most of us are just about “invited out”. That is, we’ve contacted about all the men we know who are potential members; or almost all the men we know are barbershoppers already.

So . . . if any of you have any ideas as to how to expand our circle of contacts, *please* let me, John Stiegemeyer, or Jon Mollison know what they are.

Please also remember that this is not just a committee job; it’s an every-chapter-member job. It’s in all of our interest to expand the membership roster. It’s not just for contest. Small choruses can do well in contest. (Look at Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.) It’s for more fun on regular chapter meeting nights, more quartets, and more people available for performances. So join in. All ideas are welcome!

*Warren Royer, Membership VP*

## **YEAR 2000 GOALS**

1. **24+ New Members**
2. **100 Singing Valentines**
3. **2 Grants**
4. **1 Annual Show**
5. **7 Various Retreats**
6. **1 Christmas Show**
7. **1 Very Best of the Fest**
8. **Member Retention**

*Editor's note: The following article was inadvertently left out of the March Bulletin. As a result, some of the content is dated. I decided to include it in the April edition anyway, because Brian's comments are well worth reading, even if some of them are after-the-fact! Read and enjoy.*

## **A Few Words From the Reverend**

“There was a certain church member who was very pleased with how the pastor of his congregation preached. He especially liked how the minister had a fire and brimstone approach to his sermons, and talked a lot about the devil and hell. So one Sunday after the service, that man went up to the minister and said: “You know pastor, at this church we never knew what sin was, until you came here.”

I know, it doesn't have anything to do with the Music Team. But it is funny and provides food for thought. I'm pleased as punch to be your Vice President of Music and Performance. I have to admit that the nominating committee (Dave Dolph, Al Grieser, and a gorilla) was very persuasive and careful not to tell me the job description. Otherwise someone else might be writing this article. But I am happy to say, I took the job, and now you're stuck with me and some extremely talented people. Here's the line-up and some of the things they will do for you.

Bob Shafer	Show co-chairman
Ed Fritzen	Bari section leader, contact person for all sing-outs, and assistant director
Jan-Ake Westin	Assistant director,
Raleigh Bloch	Tenor section leader, Singing Valentine coordinator
Ron Bower	Librarian
Al Grieser	President, Bass section leader
Chris Fenner	Warm-ups
Gene Hanover	Director
Brian Hall	Music VP

The Team met in January and February, discussing at some length the schedule for the year, and evaluating all the programs of our chapter. Obviously the immediate concerns are the show and contest. You guys know the score. You've all got tapes and copies of the show music. Use them. I'm looking forward to singing those great songs with you. Because of the late start, we may have to scramble a bit, but don't worry, everything will turn out OK. How do I know? I don't, it's a mystery.

The contest is gonna be a blast! My knees are still shaking from the Fall contest! The contest retreat is being planned for April 1 (no fooling!). I know from past retreats we really make a lot of progress with the music. I hope everyone whose schedules allow, will be there.

There has been some concern that we are neglecting quartet singing at chapter meetings. That has always been one of my favorite activities - to sing in front of the guys with no interruptions to “tune a chord”. The team will not be planning quarteting activities until after the show. I know I'll have to be patient and understand there is just too much on our plate. But we haven't forgotten that the thrill of quartet singing is the main reason we get together.

A final note: Ed Fritzen is the Contact for all sing-outs and is the only one who can approve them. If you get wind of an opportunity, contact Ed immediately with the info. There will be no sing-outs until after the show.

Harmonically Challenged,  
The Right Reverend Brian Hall

## Report on the Annual Show

At Chenery Auditorium on Saturday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, our Chapter presented its 59<sup>th</sup> annual show to the largest audience in many years.

The theme "Through the Years" seemed most appropriate for this particular occasion. Through the years we never had Championship Quartets from our very own chapter, namely, UPSTAGE SOUND the 1998 Pioneer District champs and FOUR PART DIGITAL SURROUND SOUND, the 1999 Pioneer District Novice Champs.

If that's not enough, think about the other two quartets. HEAR & NOW, our Special Guest Quartet from Ohio was a really fine choice to round out the evening, both on the show and at the afterglow.

PHILATOGA TOWNSHIP is a bright new star on the horizon with three of the members from our Chapter. They should do very well in Battle Creek at this month's International Prelims, and are certainly excellent candidates for the top slot in October. Wouldn't it be great to have another Kalamazoo quartet for Pioneer District Champs.

The only complaint heard over and over again was the lack of sound at the auditorium. Even those up front could not hear the speaking parts and the sound from the chorus seemed distant. After intermission, the sound system seemed very good for the three quartets.

*Herm Dykema*

### In memory of George W. Bingham

George was born in Fairbury, IL, May 20, 1913 and passed away March 22, 2000 in Inverness, Florida.

He was a well-known golfer and operated Metal Mechanics in Kalamazoo for approximately 30 years.

George was one of the very early members of the Kalamazoo Chapter when it was formed in 1941 and remained an active barbershopper until his retirement to Florida 20 years ago.

Fellow barbershoppers considered George an unusually fine baritone and a great "tag" and "woodshedder" man. He sang in several quartets, but his last and most notable being the INCIDENTALS.

George was instrumental in sponsoring Herm Dykema as a new member in the early '50s. with Dykema as lead; Clif Snyder, tenor; don Barrett, bass; the INCIDENTALS was immediately formed and placed second in their very first contest in Boyne City Bush League. Later, with John Hoppe as bass they won the District Jr. Championship.

Upon Dykema's transfer to Atlanta, GA, Clif Snyder switched to lead (and they became a better quartet) and Howard Henry a chorus bass became the new tenor. The quartet continued to be regular competitors and in constant demand in the District for chapter shows.

In Christmas cards over the years, Dykema has always expressed his gratitude to George for introducing him to the world of barbershop quartet singing.

*Herm Dykema*



**HEARTSPRING**

**"We Sing That They Shall Speak" — Heartspring**

**March – We collected \$33 at our 4 March meetings . . . . .**

## Are We Getting Better or What?

Sometimes you wonder - are we getting better? Is all this practice worth it? Can anyone tell the difference? Why don't we just do the words and notes and let it go at that? So what if we don't sing in tune or lose pitch? It's only a half a note. Most of the audiences can't tell the difference anyway, right?

Well first of all, in my opinion, we are getting better. There are times when this chorus is awesome. We should be proud of the fact that the judges are also telling us that as well. Notice that I said, "there are times". So what am I saying? Well, just that! We are getting very good, but now we need to be more consistent. Gene tells us to do certain things consistently. Like singing our vowels basically the same each time, e.g. O's should look like an "O", etc. Then we do them and guess what? Wow! They make a difference. Working on pitch and not being what I call "lazy singers". When we work at getting on top of our notes and keep our bodies in the singing position, again, Wow! What a difference. So you tell me should we do that all the time? Hmmmmmm let me think about that. Well yes. When we are singing we need to be saying to ourselves, ok this is singing now and I need to be thinking of these things because now I'm a singer and this is what singers do.

As for practice, we don't need it. Well we don't need it once we've learned to do all those things consistently. So practice does make perfect - but only if you're practicing the right things. So practice helps develop those good habits that make us sound good.

One of the things that set us apart from other music art forms is words. We sing words, while orchestras must rely on notes, harmonies, volume dynamics, timber, etc. They often do wonderful things to enhance the music and make it very enjoyable. We on the other hand can do all that plus have the words to tell a story. To that we can add visual emotion that is difficult to do with an instrument. However, if we just do notes and words we lose all those things that the orchestra has and we cheat our audience. Notes and words we can give to our audience on a piece of paper, but it won't be as good.

What about that half a note - can the audience tell? Well they may not be able to say, "Hey, you dropped a half a note", but most will be able to feel something was not as good as it could have been. Or they would enjoy it more if it were right on the money. Then there is the rest of the chorus. It's affected because they have to adjust their pitch so it at least tunes the chord. When a part slips in pitch, the other parts are apprehensive about singing their part, because they're listening so hard for a change. This tenses them up and it actually becomes harder to sing. It also may make them just a little late in their attack. So make it easier for your fellow barbershopper by singing in tune. Again, singers are expected to sing in tune, so you have say to yourself, "I'm a singer now and it's my job to get on top of that note, to be in a singers position so that my singing mechanism can function properly. I need to give myself a chance at being a good singer.

We're working on those things and you know we are getting better.

*Raleigh Bloch*

## Happy Birthday!

John vanWestrienen	4/3
Michael Root	4/28
Lynn Gardner	4/20
Diane Root	4/29

## Happy Anniversary!

Mike and Gwen Graham	4/16
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## Calendar

4/1	Contest Retreat
4/25	Contest Send-off
4/28-4/30	Spring Convention
May	Membership month
5/19-5/21	H.E.P School; Round-Up MSU
6/1	Plainwell Sing Out
6/27	Send-off for Upstage Sound
7/2-7/9	Kansas City Convention
7/30-8/6	Harmony Director's College
8/13	Bronson Park Band Shell Sing Out
8/15	Buckeye Send-Off
8/17-8/20	Buckeye Invitational
9/16	Fall Contest Retreat
9/22-9/24	Bush League

## Past Presidents

1986	Tom McCoy
1987	Tom McCoy
1988	Dan Connor
1989	Dan Connor
1990	Lee Snow
1991	Bill Oswalt
1992	Bill Oswalt
1993	John Fair
1994	John Fair
1995	Ed Fritzen
1996	Ed Fritzen
1997	Raleigh Bloch
1998	Raleigh Bloch
1999	John Fair
2000	Al Grieser

## Board Meeting Highlights – 3/22/2000

**Present:** Alex Boltenko, Al Grieser, John Fair, Warren Royer and John vanWestrienen

The Treasurer reported receipts of \$6465.13 and expenses of \$2033.20 with a balance on hand of \$9336.67 of which \$4952.31 is unallocated.

The suggestion for our 2001 Annual Show to have a 60 Year Reunion Theme and invite all past members to participate was approved. The possibility of having dress rehearsal on Tuesday and an alumni dinner on Friday of show week was discussed.

Alex Boltenko was appointed VP Public Relations by President Al Grieser.

September 16<sup>th</sup> was suggested for a one-day retreat at Kellogg Conference Center for fall contest.

A plan to make a CD next year was approved.

June 27<sup>th</sup> was set for a send-off evening for Upstage Sound going to Kansas City International Convention.

The membership attendance list program needs to be revived. This way, any member who misses a couple of weeks can be contacted. *A volunteer for this project would be appreciated.*

The board approved purchasing name badges for all new members. A sign-up sheet will be available for old members to purchase name badges at the same time.

A need to raise chapter dues was discussed and tabled.

The Board approved paying the tuition to Harmony College for Chris Fenner.

President Al Grieser suggested having a member design a new chapter logo and paying their hotel room at the Buckeye Invitational. Approved.

We need to encourage more quartet activity, as this will only improve the chorus's quality of performance.