



BIG CHIEF CHORUS
SMOKE
SIGNALS



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

Bulletin #48, April 5, 2005

We re-welcome Jim Troeger as director. During February, as he jockeyed his responsibilities toward his young family, his church activities, his new job, and our directorship, it looked like the directorship would have to go. He submitted his resignation to the Board, effective after contest, with the full intention of becoming a "regular member" of the BCC. However, letting go of us charming guys (heh-heh) is not that easy, and after some negotiation on the terms of responsibilities of the directorship, Jim has decided to rescind his resignation. The Board, and the whole chorus, is relieved at this happy outcome.

Spring Mini-retreat at the Lafayette Grande.

Thanks to Ron Clarke's arrangements, we held our spring singing retreat as a one-day in the old Pontiac Masonic Temple Ballroom. What a fine venue. Gene Hanover, from Niles MI, was our coach. He began by introducing Speech Level Singing to us, a program developed by Seth Riggs (See *Singing for the Stars.*) It emphasizes air/muscle match. The exercises are designed to make singing as natural as speaking, keeping the muscles of the throat relaxed throughout the scale, from chest voice, thru mixed voice, up thru head-voice. A kind of dopey sound helps relaxation, and a kind of whiny sound enhances palate-lift and resonant chamber. The exercises included lip trills and tongue trills and glottal

scrap. Then we applied these lessons to our contest songs, to tag singing, and to sectional work on "Old St. Louie."

As Roger Holm said, "This has been such a wonderful learning experience." As Bruce Brede said, "It was a great day! The venue was superb including, well, everything...the after glow just topped it off! Just the right amount of space for individual moments to reflect and rest but close enough for the fellowship, singing and coaching.... And the coaching.... what more can be said? Everyone was touching upper notes cleanly, at least three above "normal" and only what I had sung in my dreams on a good night. Our Tuesday warm-ups will have to consider an abbreviated bubbling and tongue-ing of Gene's scales with relaxed throats. And our contest warm-ups, well...?"



Gene Hanover working with BCC at Lafayette Grande

From our Director:

I wanted to thank all of you for your very hard work and dedication today. The results were simply amazing and I can't thank you enough for being open-minded and willing to listen to all of the great stuff Gene has to offer.

Secondly, I wanted to thank all of you for allowing me the honor of being your director. It has been a fantastic ride so far and it's only going to get better!

Best Regards, Jim Troeger

From Da Prez:

Congratulations to Gene Downie for being named BBSopper of the month for March. He did a wonderful job on the Chorus Directory and thankfully his wife Deanna is feeling well enough for Gene to be back singing with the BCC.

Thank you to all the men who contribute so much of their time to the BCC, especially: Ted Prueter for Music Librarian & Show Co-Chair; Ross Ensign for CD's & BCC PR; Chuck Murray for last months issue of Smoke Signals; John Cowlshaw for warm ups & S.S.; Jeff Doig for Show Co-Chair; Dick Johnson, Bruce Brede, & Bill Holmes for our Ensemble; Art Ripley & Roger Holm for risers; all the Big Chief Chicks; Bill Pascher for his inspiration; Dave Shantz our newest member; Jim Troeger our Director; and our wonderful Executive Board of Dick Johnson, Roger Holm, Wayne Cheyne, Bill Holmes, Jack Teuber, Zaven Melkonian, Gene Downie, and Ron Clarke.

We have lots of good singing and FUN to look forward.

AROUND THE PATCH

MEMBERSHIP (at 57)

New Members: Fred McFadyen. Welcome, Fred!

Al Monroe. Welcome back, Al!

Renewals: Bruce Collins (3), Fred DeVries (3), Gayle Mohler (3), Greg Moss (3), Wayne Chene (4), Art Carinci (6), John Cowlshaw (6), Bob Legato (6), Jim Owens (6), Jeff Spires (6), Bill Holmes (7), Gene Downie (8), Chuck Murray (10), Tom Tailford (10), Jeff Doig (13), Bert Cederleaf (15), Bob Marshall (15), Dan Valko (16), Mike Frye (18), Roger Holm (18), Tom Blackstone (19), Mel Parrish (20), Stan Mersino (21), Howard Lynn (29). (Still waiting for renewals from Walt Bachmann, Doug Corliss, Graham Frye, and Dennis Robinson.)

April Birthdays: Gayle Mohler (2nd), Jeff Spires (16th), Doug Corliss (17th), Wayne Chene (25th)

Barbershopper of the Month, March – Gene Downie. Which of his innumerable contributions shall we mention here? How about his production of the BCC Calendar and Membership Roster Booklets?

Illnesses: Mel Parrish continues to be treated for laryngeal polyps.

Dick Johnson led the chorus at its sing-out March 17th, **St Patrick's Day**, at Canterbury on the Lakes. As Pete wrote for all of us:

“Thank you for the great job you did last night directing the BCC. You have such a wonderful way of making us feel relaxed, improving our sound, and having fun. It is always a real treat to have you direct us. You are the heart and soul of the BCC. Pete”

BCC in Oakland Press

Congratulations to **Jack Teuber** for arranging for Diana Dillaber Murray's March 31st story in the Oakland Press – “Barbershop chorus to celebrate 62 years.” It was in a prominent place, page three of the main section, and it included a bit about our history, our sing-outs, and our mini-retreat with Gene Hanover at the Lafayette Grande ballroom. And even with accuracy!

Chuckles Murray continues to demonstrate the diversity of his talents, as this big guy, head of **choreography**, has mapped out delightful moves for our two contest songs. No matter how much of it we are able to incorporate in time for the Kalamazoo contest, the plans demonstrate the direction in which the chorus must move.

Al Bonney has appreciated our responses to his request for documentation of our chorus's activities in the community that would support the **district grant request** for another \$20,000 for coaching in 2006. I sent him info on our thirty-eight chorus and quartet performances (2004) to a total audience of 7600 people. Furthermore, chapter members contributed the letters of appreciation that we received from Orion Township Parks and Recreation and from the Oakland County Medical Care Facility.

Bob Legato and Barbara Workman are happy to announce the new member of their family – a two-year old **donkey** named Mudd.

Mike Corder has been singing with the baritones. Welcome, Mike.

Our **49th Annual Woodshed Contest** is coming up, Friday evening, April 8, 7:30, with its rule that quartets be limited to two members of the same chapter or registered quartet. The usual venue – Pontiac Country Club on Elizabeth Lake Rd in Waterford. As hosts, there had better be more Big Chief Choristers present than any other chapter. Thanks to Ross Ensign for designing the e-mailable flyer advertising the contest.

There's a **new computer store** in the Lakes area, which did an excellent job upgrading my 1997 ARM laptop computer for use in Florida. (John) Marshall's Computer Services is on Williams Lake Rd at Elizabeth Lake Rd.

Repertoire (according to Jim's Feb 16, 2005 spread sheet):

Ain't Misbehavin'	In the Still of the Night
Back in the Old Routine	Irish Parting Prayer
Caroline	New York, New York
Darkness on the Delta	Old St. Louie
Don't Blame Me	Something
Hi Neighbor	There's No Business like...
I Feel a Song Comin' On	This Little Light/Do Lord
If There's Anybody Here From	Under the Boardwalk
I'm Sittin' On Top of the World	(Know them!)

AROUND THE DISTRICT

Three weeks to District competition. Don't forget that your SPEBSQSA membership must be current. And you must register for the contest (either before or at).

The **MOUNTAINTOWN SINGERS**, advertised as mid-Michigan's newest and finest men's a cappella chorus, has its inaugural Performance, Sunday, April 10 at 3:00pm in Central Michigan University's Plachta Auditorium in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. Tickets are \$10. (989-631-4994)

AROUND THE WORLD

SALT LAKE:



Our **2005 International Convention** is in Salt Lake City, Utah, July 4 thru 10. The quartet competitions are Wed, July 6th (Quarter-finals), Friday evening, July 8th (Semi-finals), and Saturday evening, July 9th (Finals). The chorus finals are Saturday daytime. Don't forget that hours of web cast will be available to stay-at-homes.

NEW LOGO



"Our new logo is a marvelously elegant statement of who we are: singers of four-part harmony," said Society President Rob Hopkins. "It brings to mind a quartet, but it also could be four men in any row of a chorus," he explained. "The different colors of the facial profiles remind me that our members come from all different walks of life, yet share the core elements of singing, fellowship, fun, enrichment, and creativity. I love the way that the facial profiles add depth to the design, and the clean, uncluttered, contemporary look is great."

SNOWBIRDS

During my "practice retirement" Corinne and I spent a month in Destin, Florida, on the Gulf coast of the panhandle between Pensacola and Panama City.

Being away from home for more than several weeks at a time becomes more than just a trip or a vacation. One has to arrange for coverage of one's primary home, for mail, and bills. But one also loses the familiarity, the contacts, the routines. One has to learn new ones, where the best grocery store is, when is mail delivery, how to set up the computer for email access. One starts to call the secondary site "home," as in "I'll meet you at home." One glances at the weather in Michigan to make sure that it's worse. Etc. There is a psychological journey as well as a physical journey. I decided to explore this with other Big Chief snowbirds (using the term loosely).

Tom and Beth Ford have been visiting her mother in Fort Myers, FL for many years, but the trips have been longer since Tom has retired. This year they spent seven weeks there. She owns a triple wide trailer on the Caloosahatchee River. As a retired shop teacher, Tom was valuable to his brother-in-law who not only is in charge of the electrical connections at Southwest Florida airport, but also does a lot of work around the house. Tom also golfed a little, and they hosted visitors from up north. "Any singing?" No, but he did go to a couple of barbershop shows, one at Cape Coral and one at Port Charlotte. There he heard **GAS HOUSE GANG**, who "sounded over the hill," and **ROUNDERS**, who impressed him greatly.

Len and Yvonne Barnes have visited the Mesa, AZ area for years during school vacations and for periods up to a month. Last fall, they bought a condo in Surprise, AZ, so this year they were able to spend four months there. Their daughter lives there, so they could fly out and then rely on her car. In return, Len worked for six weeks fixing up her house for sale. The condo is in a walled/guarded community northwest of Phoenix, near Sun City West. There are 1382 units on fifty-five acres. Three times around the (stocked) lake yielded Len's 3 to 4-mile daily walk. He bought a four-wheel cart that Yvonne could push and carry her oxygen tank, so that she was able to walk more in the four months than she has done in ten years. This was the wettest Jan/Feb in a hundred years, so the Salt River and the Oak Creek Canyon were roaringly full, and the desert full of colorful flowers. Lenny took a sabbatical both from singing and from tooting. (He did follow up on a newspaper story about Singing Valentines, but the chapter was too far away.)

Bruce Brede doesn't really consider himself a snowbird. He and Bonnie visit Bonnie's sister in Inverness, FL for a couple of weeks each January. While there, he visits Star Island Resort in Kissimmee for their USTA Pro Circuit tennis tournament. They also visit their son and grandson in Seattle twice a year and on those trips he has visited the barbershop chorus across Lake Washington in Medina.

Bill Holmes isn't really a snowbird either. But he and Barbara do spend two weeks each April at their in-laws rental unit in St. Petersburg Beach. It's mostly for the warmer weather, but it also gives them a chance to do reciprocal visits with Bill's brother in Tampa, and friends in Clearwater.

For the second year, **Doc Mann** got out of Michigan, flying to La Quinta, CA for three weeks, where his mom and sister live. Later, he drove to Florida for two months where he drove around the state's whole coast, including down to Key West. He feels better being away from the cold and snow and enjoying the open road, the beauty of the water, homes, boats, food, and women.

Tom and Joana Jackson spend March in Florida, is it Clearwater? **Bill and Candy Nevaux** are spending four months in Arizona.

Of course, **John "Smitty" Smith** was an inveterate snowbird and was very active in the Cape Coral, Naples and Ft. Meyers Florida chapters during the winter months.

As for us, we rented a house a block from the whitest sand and aquamarine water I've ever known. We walked along the beach road, either to the east to the Whale's Tail beach restaurant for coffee, or to the west past Kenny D's Cajun cuisine to the Crab Trap. Latino crews were repairing Hurricane Ivan's damage in preparation for the height of the tourist season. I flew three times out of the Destin airport, looking out for low-flying F-18's from nearby Eglin Air Force Base. And I twice visited the Emerald Coast Barbershop chorus in Fort Walton Beach. It's fun to see how universal barbershop is, so that one can drop in at a new location and be welcomed and invited to quartet on a pole-cat. The Emerald Coast chorus is preparing for a show in April, around a patriotic theme. Don't know if this is because it meets in Shalimar, practically under the flight path at Eglin Air Force base or not. They are smallish, twenty were there last Thursday night, but sang pretty well.

MEET WALT BACHMANN

Our most international member, Walter Bachmann, was born in 1941 in the tiny alpine village of Uznach, Switzerland, the oldest of five children. During WW II his father served in the Swiss Army guarding the Swiss frontier. After the war he sold appliances in a Department store and was a volunteer trainer for the Swiss Bicycle team. His father also played the harmonica and accordion.

Walter grew up reading the German translation of *Tom Sawyer*, and playing cowboys and Indians in the Swiss Alps. He started playing the drums at an early age (much to the chagrin of his mom). While attending high school he started a band that imitated the style and music of Elvis Presley.

After high school he attended a two-year business college. Upon graduation he was employed by various commercial enterprises, completed his mandatory stint in the Swiss Army, and attended college part-time.

At the age of twenty-two he caught the spirit of the Kennedy presidency and joined his uncle in Marin County, California. This uncle had immigrated in 1928 and had become a chauffeur to the movie stars around Santa Barbara. He eventually became a landscape architect and developer. He also developed a very successful yacht harbor and had a landscape business that catered to the rich and famous.

Walt was fluent in German and French but not English, so he enrolled in the College of Marin to learn English and U.S. history. At night, he worked in a grocery store. Then on weekends, he helped out in his uncle's landscape business, which provided him the opportunity to work on the estates of Peter, Paul and Mary and Dave Brubeck and occasionally sit in on their practices. That still left Friday and Saturday evenings open to go into San Francisco and soak up the music of the jazz greats who appeared there on a regular basis.



In 1964 he went to Spain where he took more college courses and learned Spanish. Upon his return to Switzerland he took a commercial position with a Canadian company but also started his own trio (piano, bass, and drums). The band style was the jazzy pop style of Nat King Cole or Errol Garner with Walt doing the vocals. The band played about 25 gigs a year. Ironically they even sang "Ain't Misbehavin'" in those days, albeit in German.

Returning from the U.S., Walt lived and worked in Africa for seven years (Nigeria and Lagos). Then he returned to Switzerland, where he married and had two daughters. After his wife's death, he remarried and had a third daughter. This marriage ended in divorce.

He worked for various drug companies, including Pfizer, and spent extensive amounts of time in many different countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt (where he oversaw the building of a baby-food manufacturing plant). This work afforded him such interesting experiences as crossing the Khyber pass, being shot at during the Lebanese Civil war, and boarding the last plane out of Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion.

During an extended business trip to Cairo in 1994 he met Margaret, a Tennessee widow who was in Egypt to export French and English antiques to America. Walt and Margaret had an international courtship and married in 1995. Faced with a geographical choice, they decided to live in America, and Walt took a job with Michigan Precision Industries in Rochester Hills, Michigan. For them Walt sells auto transmission components, primarily to foreign car manufacturers.

Following a brief stint in a Swiss Men's Classical choir, Walt's music career had subsided. But when he saw a Christmas singers' flyer at the Farmer Jack store in 1996, he responded ... to a chorus at its nadir. Chris Miller had just arrived to build the membership from nineteen. It was a tough decision for Walt, not only because he knew nothing about barbershop, but also because it meant more time away from his wife than he already took as a traveling salesman. However, the chance to sing, and the really fine camaraderie has kept Walt coming back for six years now. He prefers the more modern *a cappella* singing, and it was Margaret's similar comment to Chris following an early show that led to the inclusion of the Beatles' "Something" in our repertoire.

Walt and Margaret own and continue to renovate a beautiful home near Dixie Hwy and I-75 that was our picnic locale in August 2001. As I wrote then: "Walt and Margaret's exquisite workmanship includes: an entry room with a Jacuzzi and a spiral staircase, a kitchen with six-burner commercial-size gas stove with overhanging vent hood and inlaid tile counters, and rustic-Italian style broken tile floor. Added features were their own pond cum island, their unique African art collection, and Shelby, the untiring Frisbee-chasing German Shepherd."

Repair that pitch pipe

Is your pitch pipe broken? Time to throw it out and grimace and pay another \$29 at Evola Music? Not to fret, Bubba. Send it to Robbie McNamara at the Wm Kratt Pitch Pipe Co, 40 Lafayette Place, Kenilworth NJ 07033, (908)-709-8901. Last month, I sent him two out-of-whack pipes, one so bad that he had to replace the metal pitch plate, the other he cleaned and re-tuned. After fixing both he mailed them back to me, charging, rather apologetically, \$15.

Craft Corner: Singing Baritone (from a web letter by Martin Grandahl)

Is the Bari part more about thinking or more about feeling? I've heard people talk both side of this issue, but I believe you need both to be a strong baritone.

Singing baritone is all about being inside the chord. As a Bari, you create the bridge between the lead and the bass, or the lead and the tenor, and you play a large role in making the chord ring.

You need to know when to sing strong and broad and resonant to fill the chord, as when you're on a low fifth in a 16 tone final chord, or when the chords are tight and high and you need to laser in a third nice and bright and pingy.

The baritone, more than any other part, must adjust his or her voice to suit the chord.

Knowing what to do and when to do it is obviously the key. You can take an intellectual approach and try to identify where you are in each chord. I've known baritones to write little numbers in their music so they know at all times if they are on a third or fifth or tight seventh. This certainly helps, but you cannot learn the feel of a chord by the numbers.

Each chord is different.... different pitches, different chord structures, and different inversions all in different keys. Then there is your place in that chord. You also have to take into account the vowel you are singing. And the vowel is influenced by the consonants on either side of it. Of course, each chord is influenced by the chord you have just come from and the chord you are going to next.

Obviously, always having each and every one of these factors in your head and looking them up on an internal chart to see what needs to happen is an impossibility. I believe that this is partly why people with music-school training often have trouble with the baritone part. Depending on their school and instructors, many of them use only these intellectual tools for taking a song apart, and that will only get you so far.

In each of those different chords and inversions and vowels and pitches, there is the way your part feels. That "feel" is made up of many things including what your ears are telling you, how your voice physically feels on that note, and what your intellect is telling you about what is really going on in that chord.

That feeling is the key to singing a successful baritone. When I learn a new song, I start off learning my part, but once it's learned I'm really "singing to the chords." I know my part, but I also know, as I sing along, that the next note needs to be placed right... there... in order to make the chord happen. I develop a feel for the song and the people I'm singing with and I know how to tune it, and how to place it to make my note mesh with the rest of the singers and the rest of the chord.

Tag singing is perfect for this. I believe that most of what I know about how to make a chord ring I learned while singing tags.

So... it is the thinking that helps you learn the feel. The thinking has to come first, and is always there to some degree, but it is the feeling you develop that takes you the rest of the way. That's what tells you to tune it a little higher, or sing a little brighter, or open up the vowel a little more – all those little adjustments that make the baritone part unique and fun to sing.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING Excerpts, March 29, 2005, from Bill Holmes

Pete Mazzara, President, called a special meeting of the board. Present were: Pete Mazzara, Dick Johnson, Roger Holm, Jack Teuber, Zaven Melkonian, Ron Clarke, Gene Downie and Bill Holmes. The purpose of the meeting was to determine if the Board was in favor of retaining Jim Troeger as director of the chorus since he thought it over deeply and was rescinding his resignation. Pete gave the board members the background leading up to this occasion. There was a full and complete discussion. The board unanimously voted to retain Jim as our director. We will do our best to lighten his load so he only has to give attention to the music development of the chorus and he will provide input as he feels necessary. The board is glad Jim wishes to continue as director. The board will take steps to improve its discipline during rehearsals.

Jack Teuber, VP Marketing and PR, has informed us of the following **events and attire**:

April 8th Woodshed Contest, 7:30 pm, Pontiac Country Club, 4335 Elizabeth Lake Rd, one miles west of M-59. **Chapter Shirt with casual pants.**

April 30th Spring Convention at Kalamazoo. **Class A uniform.**

June 10th, 11:00 am warm-up. Performance at Independence Oaks, 9501 Sashabaw Rd, Clarkston, Convention of Parks and Recreation Directors (National) **Chapter Shirts with Gray Pants, Black Shoes**

June 14th, 6:15 pm warm-up. Performance at Orion Parks Concert Series, 2525 Joslyn Rd, Orion Twp. **Chapter Shirts with Gray Pants and Black Shoes.**

June 21st, Bratwurst Gathering held at Heritage Park in Frankenmuth. Hosted by the Flint Arrowhead Chorus. **Chapter Shirts.**

July 19th, 6:30 pm warm-up. Sing-Out at Sunrise Apartments at 5700 Water Tower Place, Clarkston. **Chapter Shirts with Gray Pants and Black Shoes.**

My Wild Irish Rose

An Irishman named O'Leary, who loved to sing as he worked, bought a mule to farm his garden. The mule worked well, but was almost totally deaf. So, when his owner yelled "Whoa!" the animal often continued plowing.

Asked how the mule was working out, O'Leary shook his head. "There was a time," he said, "when all my neighbors could hear was me singing my lilting melodies. Lately, I'm afraid, all they've heard are my riled Irish whoas."

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

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: Wayne Chene

VP: Music and Performance: Roger Holm

VP: Marketing & PR: Jack Teuber

Secretary: Bill Holmes

Treasurer: Dick Johnson

Members at Large: Ron Clarke, Zaven Melkonian

Chorus Manager: Art Carinci

Music Team: Roger Holm, Johnson, Doig, Ensign, Melkonian, Murray, Prueter, Troeger

Bulletin Editor: John Cowlshaw

Music Librarian: Ted Prueter

Singing Valentines: Ross Ensign

Polecats: Zaven Melkonian

Quartet Development: Bruce Brede

Sunshine (Chaplain): Walt DeNio/Bill Dabbs

Uniforms Manager: Ron Clarke

Tape/CD Librarian: Ross Ensign

YMIH: Ron Clarke

Calendar

Apr 5, T, 7pm BCC Rehearsal, Crary

Apr 8, F, 7:30 49th Annual Woodshed Contest

Apr. 11, M SPEBSQSA Birthday, 1938.

Apr 12, T, 7pm BCC Rehearsal, Crary

Apr 13, W, 7pm Exec Bd Mtg, at Wayne Chene's.

Apr. 17, Su P-W Chapter Birthday! Founded in 1943.

Apr 19, T, 7pm BCC Rehearsal, Crary, with Al Fisk, coaching

Apr 26, T, 7pm BCC Rehearsal, Crary

Apr. 28, Th. Extra Rehearsal, at Central United Methodist Church.

Apr 29-May 1 District Convention, @Kalamazoo

Apr 5, T, 7pm BCC Rehearsal, Crary

May 3, T BCC Rehearsal, Crary

May 11, W Exec Bd Mtg, 7 pm at Zaven Melkonian's.

May 13-15 Harmony Roundup, @ MSU

Jun 10, F, 11am Performance, Independence Oaks

Jun 14, T, 6:15pm Performance, Orion Parks Concert Series

Jun 21, T Frankenmuth Bratwurst Gathering

July 3-10 BHS Convention, Salt Lake City

July 19, 6:30 pm Singout Sunrise Apts,

July 31-Aug.7 Harmony College 2005, @Columbus, OH