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WHOLE WORLD SINGING

CHORD-INATOR

BARBERSHOP
HARMONY
SOCIETY



MINNEAPOLIS
COMMODORES

OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, CHAPTER
**** A CHAPTER WITH AN ENVIABLE PAST - AN UNBOUNDED FUTURE ****

10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O'LAKES

OCTOBER 2020 - VOL. 76 - NO. 5



President's Corner



Dave Casperson

Hello Commodores!

I have just a few thoughts for this issue of the CHORDinator

I am reminded just how thankful I am to be part of this group. Through a very difficult time in our nation's history, I am very glad that we can still be somewhat of a constant in each other's lives. We share a joy for making music together, and that creates a very strong common bond.

At this time, I am also reminded of how divisive people can be. Going through another election cycle, I have again seen what it is (and what it isn't) to be respectful

and considerate of others. It is very easy to get sucked into debates and arguments about what we think is right and wrong, and I am glad that the BHS society frowns upon the discussion of politics within our ranks.

I have made many friends within the Commodores, and in most cases I don't even know what those friends' political persuasions are. I have enjoyed just getting to know individuals, aside from politics, not only focusing on that common bond of music and barbershop, but other aspects of life (family, vocation, hobbies, etc).

With an "attitude of gratitude", I am thankful for each one of you and your unique contributions to the vibrancy of our chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. I look forward to see what we can continue to achieve together, and the joy we can bring to the people for whom we perform.

In closing, I would like to make an appeal, specifically toward our

Holiday program: PLEASE consider participating in the show, as well as attending our weekly zoom meetings for important information and rehearsal. We have a lot of logistics to attend to in order to make our virtual program a reality, and communication will be key. There's no better place to get that vital information than during our virtual chapter meetings. I look forward to seeing you there every Tuesday at 7pm!

It's Great to be a Commodore!

Dave Casperson



Georgia Grind

By Jim Erickson, Breaching Baritone



Jim Erickson

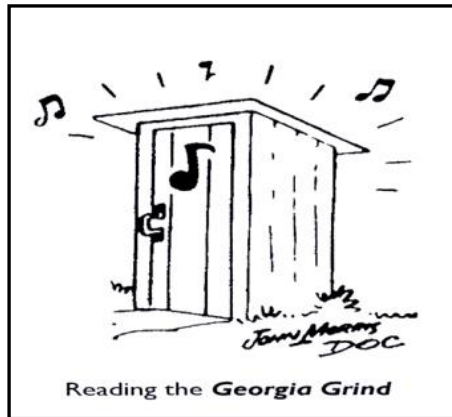
I really sympathize with those poor students who are having to learn by remote computer in their homes. Some even have to trek to a wi-fi enabled school bus parked strategically in some spot to provide modem support, or to a library, or **McDonalds**, or some other facility. Since my wife, **Mary**, and I are spending our months trying to avoid the **Covid-19** by living at our cabin, we have had to rely on a cell-connected modem. Had a land line a few years ago, but the technology, according to **AT&T**, became outmoded and replacement tech is only provided to big cities. I am still investigating possible alternatives, but there are many roadblocks, inconveniences, steep prices and on and on.

My current plan is grandfathered in at 30 gigabytes with a “safety” mode that does not charge me for data usage over that amount. “Unlimited” right? Well yes, except the safety mode is so slow that half the connections give me the message that there must be some kind of network error, etc., and are unable to connect. The sites that do connect are fraudulently slow in that they are pretty much unusable unless you are in the midst of a pandemic, confined to your place, and only go outside to take out the garbage, fetch a few groceries and toilet paper, and make a pickup run to a local pub/restaurant/bar where you must go inside to get the “to go” dinner. And where no one in the bar is wearing a mask as they sit shoulder to shoulder over cocktails or **Leinies** beer. The bartender slides the cardboard box across the bar (no mask) and I beat it for the door attempting to avoid the almost visible aerosol viruses floating like miniscule hot air balloons between me and the exit. Just waiting to land in my mucal orifices and bring me down.

Mmm... Let me see now. Where was

I? Ah, yes! The 30 gigabytes a couple of months ago was half of what I used. Movies, **Zoom**, **TED** and all the rest burned through way more than my plan offered at a suitable speed. So, to conserve my gigs this last month I cut out all but email and a few apps. And to further conserve on Zoom, among others, I took to parking in front of the food takeout places while waiting, and also across the street from the local public library. Too, I found a supermarket a little closer to home and sat in the parking lot tuning in the Commodores internet rehearsal and **Stars of Summer**. (I thought maybe there would be a similar program in the fall and I even had a title. “**Fall ‘n Stars**.” Like it?)

For these varied wi-fi locations, you may recall seeing me in the driver’s seat of my car as I Zoomed with some of you. It was the evening when I was



parked in the supermarket lot, that I asked **Jamye**, Zoom Director in charge, if there was going to be an intermission break. Because I needed a break to pick up a rotisserie chicken in the supermarket. “No Break!” So, at the session end, I checked and, of course, they had run out of chicken by then. As I reported at the Zoom afterglow, I had to settle for five pounds of squeaky **Wisconsin cheese curds** and a case of **Leinies Summer Shandy**. Not a comparable substitute, but not bad.

One consequence of propping my iPad on the steering wheel for Zoom is that it shows me at an unflattering angle. My under-the-chin skin is not as tight as it once was (So, is yours?) and the good **Paul Wigley** pounced on that to hurl an insult about my appear-

ance. I have always been kind to him but maybe he’s been isolated for too long. I suspect he misses having sixty plus adoring faces sing to him as he directs. Perhaps he should stick to pondering over the topic of his recent love upon which he expounded in surgical detail, the famed “**Hairy Epithetical Sphinxer**.” To show that I hold no grudges, though, I am dedicating a song to him. Hopefully he will take the time to **Google** it to bring up a few popular renditions of “**I Miss My Mother Most of All**.” The opera, **Billy Budd**, (Paul told us) promotes the message that “Something has to die before something beautiful can come out of it.” For me, the “My Mother” song does not have to die so long as it plays in Paul’s head forever. That would be beauty enough...

Enough about Paul! With the pandemic still resulting in thousands of deaths, I am not optimistic that the chorus will be able to get back to some kind of normal rehearsing any time soon. With that in mind, I applaud all the efforts to make up for what we have lost or set aside. I was going to write, “Necessity is the mother of invention.” (Wrote it anyway...) It is fascinating to see the many ways in all fields that minds have worked to overcome this ongoing tragic medical menace. Please encourage those who are throwing themselves into ingenious solutions, to keep up the good work.

Remember, hold fast to that which is good. Value the truth as if your life depends on it. ‘Cuz it does! And, here’s an update on those **Georgia Grind masks** I am developing. Not only will that powerful name, Georgia Grind, be emblazoned in bright color across a black background, but also, all little aerosol virus devils will be blocked. Better yet, your breath, in all fragrances including garlic and lutefisk, will be converted to a sweet baritone emission entrancing all who are beyond the six-foot social distancing circle. Even more so within the circle, but then you allow others to enter it entirely at their own risk.

Stay tuned, Stay masked and Stay well...

Minneapolis, Minn. Chapter
 Land O'Lakes District, BHS
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 6730 Nicollet Avenue South
 Richfield MN 55423

Join the Northern Pines Harmony Brigade! You WON'T be sorry. Just contact Dave Speidel.

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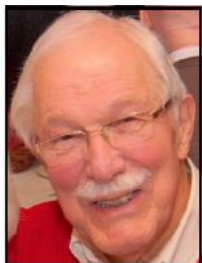
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Musings from a Barbershop Curmudgeon



Bob Dykstra

According to **Bob Spong's** impeccable records the **Hut Four** sang over 1400 shows and traveled almost

400,000 miles during his 17 years with the quartet. We also traveled extensively with two other tenors in the three years preceding Bob's joining the Hut Four so it's hard to remember specific shows unless there was something unique about them. A few come readily to mind, for a variety of reasons.

One category of shows that fortunately I have relatively few memories of might be called "take your money and run." One such experience occurred when we were hired to perform at intermission of a dance in the **Medina Ballroom**. The band stopped playing, all of the dancers retreated to the seating area, drinks and conversation ensued, and we were left to sing to the vacated dance floor. We quickly learned the obstacles of performing when you can't make eye contact.

Another performance that had all the makings of a similar experience took place in the late 1960s when we thought we had been hired to sing for a group from **Honeywell**. Our gig was on the second floor of **Jax Café** and when we were introduced we were greeted with dead silence by an audience of 225 people, each of whom was masked in one way or another. We sang our first song which again was met with silence. After an excruciating thirty sec-

onds or so each audience member removed his/her mask and we recognized a room full of friends, who, under the leadership of **Dick Plaisted**, had come to honor the Hut Four for their many years of service to the Minneapolis Chapter and to Barbershopping in general. Our baritone **Dan Howard** looked at the unmasked group and whispered to the other three of us, "Oh, oh we don't get paid again tonight."

Some shows were memorable because of the exceptional talent that performed. The 1961 Pasadena Show jumps out in that regard. The emcee was well-known TV personality, **Art Baker**, who was a member of the Pasadena chapter. The quartets who performed on the show included: (1) **The Saints**, who at that time were 5th place International medalists; (2) the **Baytown 4**, who at that time were 4th place international medalists; (3) the **Gala Lads**, who were to win the gold at the 1962 International Convention; (4) the **Evans Quartet**, who at the time were reigning International Quartet Champions; (5) the **Buffalo Bills**, 1950 International gold medalists and stars of the Broadway musical and soon-to-be popular movie, *Music Man*; (6) the **Hut Four**, who sported no medals but had finished 11th in International competition in 1959; (7) the **Osmond Brothers**, who at the time were 12, 10, 8, and 6 years old and soon to become regulars on the **Andy Williams** television show. Then to add just one more bit of sparkle to the show, four-year-old **Donny Osmond** came out on stage to sing a number with his brothers. (I wonder where Marie was). That was a real Parade of Quartets in every sense of the

word and one I shall never forget. Wow!! And one more thing. The Pasadena chorus opened both halves of the show. I don't remember but that must have been a long show!

Another memorable show, but for quite different reasons, took place in a small Wisconsin town (I don't remember just where). The show was held in a small building with a temporary stage on one end and a double-doored entryway on the other. This layout proved to be important because the power went out during the show leaving the building in total darkness. No problem. A vehicle pulled up to the open-doored entryway with its lights on and provided enough illumination for the show to go on. And the building was small enough that no amplification was needed.

Another show, this one (I think) in Mondovi, Wisconsin, was memorable because of the uniqueness of our dressing room. We had sung in southern Minnesota on a Saturday afternoon, had run into a highway sign because of a sudden dead end to the road we were on, staggered home in my damaged car, and found out that the **Atomic Bums** were trying to reach us. They were scheduled to headline a show in Mondovi, a city in Wisconsin about 125 miles from the Twin Cities, but had to cancel because of a family emergency, and desperately hoped we could replace them. We agreed but informed them we could not be in Mondovi by show time. The Bums and Mondovi chapter had no alternative but to ask us to do our best.

Fortunately, we had our stage costumes with us so we hustled to ditch my battered sedan in favor of one of the other quartet member's station wagon and hit the road. We took turns changing clothes in the back of the vehicle and arrived at our destination ready to sing but considerably late. Fortunately, our old friend from Menominee, **Ed Phelan**, was emceeing the show and he kept the audience entertained until we arrived. As I recall everything went quite normally after that, and as we all know.....the show must go on.

Another show must go on experience was a 1965 appearance on the Bloomington, Minnesota annual show. The Hut Four was scheduled to share the stage with the Jubilaires, who were destined to earn the Land O' Lakes District quartet gold medal in 1966. However, just before show time the **Jubilaires'** bass became ill and couldn't go on. As a result we were asked to sing two thirty-minute spots. This turned out to be serendipitous, however, because unbeknownst to us, a soon-to-become Barbershopper **Bob Griffith** was in the audience and taped our whole show on a reel to reel tape recorder. It wasn't until many years later that we learned of this and asked if we could listen to the tape. The quality of the recording was remarkable and included everything we sang that evening, the best of our repertoire at the time. To this day it's the best recording I have of the Hut Four.

I also remember some shows because there was something unique or different about our stage entrance. We sang a concert at Carleton College, for example, at which we somehow were not quite ready to go on when we were introduced. In our hurry to get on stage our "nimble" tenor Bob Spong somehow managed to step into a waste basket back stage. His momentum carried him on stage.....waste basket and all.

Two other incidents I recall vividly involved our bass. **John Hansen**. We performed at Rochester for an IBM

group one night and were relaxing in the warm-up room when suddenly unexpectedly we were told that we were to be introduced in a couple of minutes. John panicked because he couldn't find his bow tie. He scoured the room and asked us to do the same. We all searched diligently even though the other three of us could see the tie already in place on his being. We finally broke down and told him just in time to make our entrance.

Another memorable occasion was when we appeared on the **Arthur Godfrey** radio show in late 1953. We had won the Talent Scouts Television Show in competition with other military acts which earned us a week of performing on Godfrey's radio show. The radio program, which was broadcast live, was divided into 15-minute segments followed by advertising, and each segment ended exactly on each quarter-hour even if that meant breaking away from the broadcast in the middle of somebody's musical number. Furthermore, Arthur never told anybody in advance (including his regulars) when they would be called upon. (As an aside, the Hut Four, although performing on a week of shows, never met Godfrey, nor talked to him, except during brief interviews as part of the programs.)

There was an expectation, therefore, that an act could be called upon at any time without warning and had to be ready. On one of the programs a 15-minute segment was winding down and John decided there was no chance of our being called upon because time wouldn't permit our performing. Therefore, he informed us he was going to answer nature's call while he had a chance. The other three of us, well aware of the unpredictability of program scheduling, almost had to physically restrain John from taking a "potty break" at that time and it was a good thing we did. Soon after our disagreement, we were called upon to sing and only made it through part of our number before the broadcast was interrupted for advertising. I've wondered for

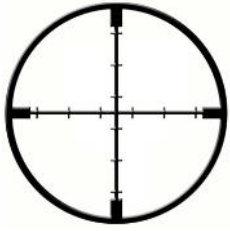
years.....what if John had gone to the bathroom when he wanted to? What would Arthur have done for his show....called on someone else? On a personal level, what would he have done to the Hut Four? I'll bet we'd have been on an early plane back to Fort Riley.

And how could I forget the most unique singing experiences of all, the small-group and bedside performances we put on in military hospitals in Japan, Guam, Okinawa, and the Philippines in 1968 and 1970. We had the honor and privilege of representing the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America on two USO-sponsored 17-day trips to entertain hospitalized veterans who had been wounded in Viet Nam.

It was difficult to sing in some of the wards housing the most-seriously wounded, but very rewarding at the same time. A couple of specifics I recall from our second visit to the Philippines was an earthquake that jolted our beds one evening and a quartet we encountered at Clark Air Force Base composed of an Air Force Major and his three sons, **Todd, Aaron, and Scott**, who called themselves appropriately **Kidder and Sons**. As I recall at least two of the three sons were pre-teenagers at the time but I'm unable to find verification of that. Ironically, a year after we met them the foursome appeared on the **Ed Sullivan** Show, as had the Hut Four about 15 years before. And in 1987 a considerably older Kidder, father Don, and his considerably older sons earned the gold medal in Far Western District Quartet Competition.

What a time!

Hunter's Bullseye



Shawn Hunter

Congrats to **Randy Klopfleisch** for 60 years of barbershopping! He was awarded a certificate in recognition of all his years of singing and service to the Minneapolis and San Fernando chapters. You are an inspiration, Randy!

As we move into fall, I would like to challenge you all to send in pictures and stories to me for the CHORDinator. Focus on how you are continuing your favorite hobby (barbershopping, duh). It can be a funny story about the challenges of Zoom, challenges of social distancing while singing, etc. Send to shawn.h.hunter@gmail.com

I will start the ball rolling....All the while we have been Zooming on Tuesdays, my dog **Zed** has visited me in my office. When I start singing, he starts a-howling....LOUDLY. It is a good thing I am on mute! He got used to it and then started the howling anytime I started singing barbershop. After that, he progressed to howling whenever I sang ANYTHING. Oy Vey!!



From Fearless Leader...



Jamye Casperson

The Ten Commandments of Singing according to me



1. Practice makes permanent
2. Never sing louder than beautiful
3. Sing with confidence not fear
4. Breathe in the shape of the first vowel
5. Long notes never "sit". They either crescendo or descrescendo or both
6. All music must dance
7. Never think the same pitch on repeated notes—always think slightly higher.
8. Sing with the most beautiful sound you can produce—all the time.
9. Be a singing athlete! Your body is your instrument—occupy your entire space when you sing.
10. There is nothing more tragic in choral singing than the look of indifference.

If you would have told me on March 9th, that we would be rehearsing at our computers on October 1st, I would have said you were crazy! However, we are doing it and we are planning a great holiday show! Sure it is not what we want to be doing, but (as I tell myself and my kids all the time), worrying changes NOTHING! So don't worry about how much longer we might be doing this. We will keep doing it until we don't have to anymore and then we will be back together singing in person and bringing friends with us to rehearsal to introduce them to the best group of guys we know.

Every one of you that has attended a Zoom meeting, read the Pitchpiper, are reading this article now, turned off the news and listened to music instead, and/or sang barbershop in the comfort of your home or car, is helping to keep your spirit and the spirit of barbershop singing alive! Good for you!! If you aren't currently singing with the Commodores, come to our Zoom meetings anyway. Tuesdays at 7:00pm. The wonderful **Steve Grady** hosts the meetings...send him an email if you don't get the weekly invites and you would like to join us.

Jamye

Virtual Choirs Rock!



Paul Paddock

I first became familiar with **Eric Whitacre**, having performed some of his pieces with choirs at my undergraduate

school in western North Carolina. It was a little later that I came across some of his virtual choir clips including 'Lux Aurumuque', 'Water Night', & 'Sleep' and thought, "Gee it would be great if I was part of something like that (Referring to the virtual choirs)!"

Here it was about 6-7 years later and now that COVID had struck, there was an opportunity to be part of another virtual choir work he was concocting. I got the invite within weeks of the deadline in mid-May and leapt at it! Each of us signed up for a free account on his website <https://virtualchoir6.com> (Join the Choir!). From there, we were able to download the sheet music in open-staff format (5 parts) for our convenience. He had provided a separate video of himself conducting with piano accompaniment for our use in recording our parts, which started off with a count-off and single clap. In the recording, we also clapped for synchronization reference to make life easier for the sound- and video-editing crews later on. We also had helpful tracks of each part recorded by appointed section leaders either mixed, solo, or part-predominant over the others at our disposal--either in audio or video format using Youtube and Soundcloud. He shared some singing anecdotes for a more unified sound and to bring out the intended emotions of the piece to mind while recording as well.

During our production time, he and his wife also held 3 virtual rehearsals and a sectional for each part, so we had a cesspool of resources to draw from. I was delighted that he took special care to reach out to and include resources for the blind and deaf as well; sheet music also was available in braille, and there were learning videos with sign language--you could see some people signing the music in the feature as well. There were participants who also took part, when they couldn't in-person or with others, such as those with cystic fibrosis. Anyone with a debilitating disease or disability was also invited to join. The audience was indeed much wider than would've been in-person.

The equipment options for us were microphones, phones, computer screens, go-pro cameras,... as long as it created the clearest sound and picture resolution for the feature. It was also asked of us to record in a space with no background noise, and using a plain background, with a clear view of our faces. There had to be no visual or aural distractions, such as patterned attire, logos, text-alerts, alarms, background traffic, fans, background noise, talking, etc. As long as we adhered to the resolution settings asked of us and left at least 4-counts' space on either side, we were a go!

Once everyone submitted his or her recording by the hard due date, it was off to the editing companies for the media production and tie-together, and for us it was the wait for the premiere showing. We were given heartfelt thank-you's and certificates for taking part. We also had the options of receiving updates on the process to the final

product as well as joining the Facebook group to meet/socialize with other singers. Eric & company sent periodic emails letting us know of different milestones such as 'over 5,000 have contributed so far', 'now over 10,000'... and they kept us in the loop on where happenings in the process. 129 Countries were represented. I remember that they had to pause production so we could allow reflective/open conversational time after the George Floyd incident so the air time was pushed to mid-July rather than late June originally.

It was truly a comforting and globally heartwarming community built, like a choral family that really touched everyone's lives, giving hope and lights when certain countries had harsher isolation rules or unrest going on than others. As Eric says, "I think that strange sense of togetherness we felt speaks to that part of the human spirit which we all share: a primal ache to find other members of our family, an ache to lift our voices as one and become part of something larger than ourselves." With that, I can't wait to be part of the next one (VC7) that comes out!

I believe that's about the gist of it.

The full making-of can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fDNpqaerlw&feature=youtu.be

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LOOKING AHEAD

Mid Dec —Christmas Show streaming
Apr 24 —Annual Show

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