

KEEPING THE
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

MARCH 2021 - VOL. 77 - NO. 2

From Fearless Leader...



Share the Good!

Jamye Casperson

Now is the time to share the Commodores with other singers around us. Other than we are a choir of great people that sing great music? Well, being a part of music is part of better health. Music helps:

1. Cognitive performance:

Johns Hopkins says that there are a few things that stimulate the brain the way music does. If you want to keep your brain engaged throughout the aging process, listening to or playing music is a great tool. It provides a total brain workout.

2. **Mood:** ummm, clearly ☺
We don't need a study for this one!

3. **Reduce Stress:** studies show that people that listen to music tend to recover more quickly from a stressor.

4. **Learning:** playing classical music while studying im-

proves focus and concentration. A study conducted by Northwestern University found that music helps kids learn language and speech skills.

5. **Sleep:** playing music before going to sleep helps improve sleep quality.

6. **Memory:** studies show that music stimulates memories. But we don't need a study to prove that...you can remember what song was playing when big moments happened in your life. Neurologist Oliver Sacks says that "Music evokes emotion, and emotion can bring with it, memory...it brings back the feeling of life when nothing else can."

7. **Motivation:** we play music as athletes run out on the field, as they walk up to the batter's box; we play music during halftime, when a touchdown is scored. Gyms have music playing in the weight room, people wear headphones when they work out.

Why wouldn't you share the Commodores with your friends and family and acquaintances that like to sing? You would be giving them all of this!



Georgia Grind

By Jim Erickson, *Breathing Baritone*



Jim Erickson

Does the air seem fresher to you with maybe a hint of spring? Especially after that prolonged cold spell. And perhaps with the hope of finally making some solid progress against Covid. Not only were so many deaths unnecessary, but so many people are having to deal with long term effects of the infection. Extended loss of taste and smell and the like. But what caught my attention recently is the difficulty some have in getting back to more normal breathing. As you probably know by now, one of the more limiting consequences of this virus is overcoming weakened lung functions and that plays right into a basic facet of Barbershop singing.

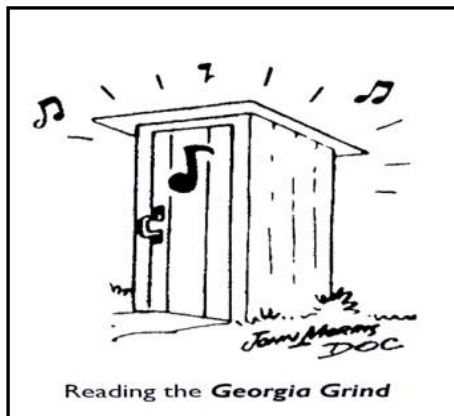
One of first things I learned when I began quartet (and later, Barbershop choral singing) was the need to learn how to breathe. Properly. Singing in a church choir, school choirs, community groups and such was less demanding, breathwise, and they allowed one to sneak a breath now and then without embarrassment. Barbershop choral singing was a bit more strident, but directors were always willing to allow a necessary “snuck in” breath where the arranger had challenged the singer to go all-out in singing long, long phrases. Just learn to take the breath in a non-obvious, staggered place so that the rest of the chorus could cover for you and no one would know the difference.

But, in a quartet or small group, you pretty much have no choice but to learn effective breathing. And that, of course, is why leaders emphasize proper breathing in warmups. But I am most likely telling you something you already well know. So why do I even take your time now to mention it?

Well, I just watched a segment on TV where out-of-work, or at least somewhat idled, opera singers were helping

Covid victims who were having substantial trouble regaining their ability to breathe normally once again. There were individual sessions and also, through the recent wonder of ZOOM, group computer sessions, that helped the patients work on regaining their lung capacity. And breathing. The results were quite encouraging and exposure to music was a reward in itself. Need I add that the learners were growing in their enthusiasm as well as their health. Who knows? Maybe even in music appreciation!

So what? You don’t have to be around Barbershop very long to realize the benefits of music and the accompanying sound techniques (pun intended) that are part of better singing. Another bunch of benefits you just can’t miss is that it helps children learn, lifts spirits, provides a panorama of choices, connects humans in so many ways of



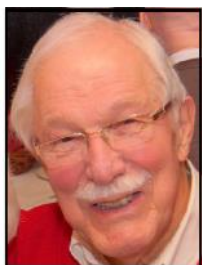
vocal expression, and is a connection to those whose minds have become clouded by injury, age and/or memory. So often, some who seldom communicate anymore will suddenly begin to respond to music they learned or enjoyed decades earlier.

But you know all of this. And you know about breathing where I have meandered in this article to talk about. However! What we take for granted as Barbershoppers has become a means to improve health in yet one more way and deal with the threat of a new of disease. Keep that in your quiver any time you are encouraging someone to join you in the Barbershopping experience.

Good Breathing. Good songs. Good mind exercise. Good entertainment. Good camaraderie. And so much more that is good. All great Barbershopping reasons to “hold fast to that which is good.” Meanwhile, it’s interesting to see how creative people are becoming in every walk of life. If large numbers can’t walk the streets now at the Minnesota State Fair, have them drive through to see the sights and sample some State Fair Food. If they can’t watch the Mardi Gras parade as it winds down the street, then line the residential and other streets with float-like decorations in a myriad of wild colors and themes. Or sit around a firepit socially distancing but enjoying the warmth of the campfire and conversation. Even an outdoor buffet. The adjustments seem unending. And I am sure that many of the new approaches will carry over into the new normal we will someday turn to. In fact, I have embarked upon some alternatives to my usual techniques in researching the origins of the **Georgia Grind**. Can’t wait to have you see the results of my new trodding of the old past. In addition to developing a line of Georgia Grind masks, I am developing a clear, plastic face shield. What is new about that, you say? Well, the new shield will have the facility to project sheet music inside the mask for easy reading, listen to learning tracks and entertaining music inside the mask, a subtle microphone to project your voice, as well as a gentle, scented breeze wafting through to your nostrils enhanced by supplemental oxygen for alertness. In fact, our former director, **Paul Wigley**, has requested a scent that reminds him of ocean breezes. He is such a powder puff when he returns in the spring to the North Land. And he was raised on a Minnesota farm near Nicollet. I guess it was just too much for him.

Keep on recruiting new members, “Zooming” and wearing that mask. This whole thing will be under control in a baritone minute! Stay healthy and really work on making them there eyes smile over the top of your mask. Keep ‘em guessing as to what’s below...

Musings from a Barber-shop Curmudgeon



Bob Dykstra

The Twin Cities area has been a hotbed of Barbershop harmony for many many

years.....even longer than I've been a part of it. I

decided to remind myself and to inform you (if you're interested) about local chapters who once were or still are active members of the Barbershop Harmony Society. (The term "local chapters" is used rather broadly as you'll soon find out). My sources of information (besides my declining memory) were Harry Purinton's "Land O'Lakes: The Early Years (1943-1980)"; the Minneapolis chapter newsletter, the "Chord-Inator"; other chapter publications; and LOL District Directories.

Minneapolis led the way by chartering in January 1944, the first chapter in all of Minnesota to do so and the second in what is now the Land O'Lakes district, preceded only by Racine, Wisconsin in 1943. Early movers and shakers in the fledgling chapter included **Joe Williams, Elton Bjorklund, Luther Sletten, Walt Swanberg** and **E.W. (Doc) Browne**. In 1946 Minneapolis and other chapters in Minnesota and Upper Michigan petitioned to join the thriving Wisconsin Association of Chapters. All were accepted in 1947 at which time the expanded district changed its name to Land O'Lakes.

The first Minneapolis Chapter Parade of Quartets was held at West High School in 1948 and featured two guest quartets, the **Four Kernels** from Omaha, and the soon-to-become-famous **Chordettes** from Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Seven chapter quartets including the **Atomic Bums** and **Ewald Golden Guernseys** also performed as did a 139-man chapter

chorus. I don't have membership numbers for the next few years but in 1954 the Minneapolis chapter's 141 members made it the fourth largest chapter in the Society. In 1982 our membership of 145 hearty souls still ranked us in the top ten of Society membership. Current membership (2020) totals 97 so it's likely that the Commodores have been at or near the century mark during the intervening years. In a way this factoid is even more impressive when you consider all of the chapters that were formed through the years in the Twin Cities area which doubtless cost our chapter some members who lived closer to the meeting places of the fledgling chapters and/or preferred their program goals. The establishment of the Hilltop Chapter in 1985 certainly resulted in the exodus of a number of Minneapolis chapter members. (But more about that later).

Before moving on I'd like to point out the incredible role our Minneapolis Chapter played in the growth of Barbershopping in Minnesota. According to the program for the 1969 Silver Anniversary celebration, the Commodores sponsored eleven chapters, those chapters sponsored eleven more chapters, which in turn introduced our great hobby to three more. That's quite a family!

The first chapter in the twin cities area to profit from the aegis of the Commodores was St. Paul in 1948. I know little about the chapter's early years but remember **Orrin Slind** as a mover and a shaker and the Pioneer's Quartet with **Herb Heunisch** singing lead to "Roll the patrol up closer to the curb; Grandmother can't step that high." As an aside I recall how we in the **Hut Four** used to marvel at how those old guys could still sing and perform at their advanced ages. Then we heard of Herb's passing away at an afterglow in Hudson at the age of 59. Somehow that doesn't seem very old to me now. The chapter was renamed the Greater St. Paul Area Chapter when it merged with the Ro-

seville Chapter in 1965.

The St. Croix Valley Chapter was chartered in 1951 under the sponsorship of the Menominee Barbershoppers. The chapter relocated to Hudson in 1955 and it was there that I first became acquainted with them. My wife, **Lou**, and I were married in October 1956 and lived in Hudson while I completed my teaching degree at UW-River Falls. Sometime during the 1956-57 academic year the now Hudson-based chapter held its annual show which I remember for a couple of special reasons. First, the director of the chorus at the time was **Harold Ulring**, later to direct the Commodores, who I discovered was a first cousin of my mother-in-law. It was in Hudson that I first became acquainted with him and he and I became lifelong close friends. In addition, one of the guest quartets on the Hudson show was the **Four Errors** from Cannon Falls, whose tenor was **Bob O'Gorman**, who later sang with the very popular **Mel-O-Dons**, and he too became one of my very best lifelong friends. (In fact, I delivered a eulogy at his memorial service). I should also add that the chapter moved its meeting place to Stillwater in 1968 where the Croix Chordsmen Chorus has become a fixture in the community. I associate **Swede Olson** with the early days of the chorus, and the incomparable **Judd Orff** has been a multi-talented dynamo in support of the chapter and Barbershopping in general for the past half century.

The next chapter in the area to charter was Roseville in 1957. I'm not sure I'm accurate on this but I associate the Roseville chapter with **Jim Richards, Fred Street**, and the **Rose Villains Quartet**. Roseville merged with St. Paul in 1965 and the combined Barbershop group became known as the Greater St. Paul Chapter and its North Star Chorus.

**Minneapolis, Minn. Chapter
Land O'Lakes District, BHS
Meetings every Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION TBD**

Chapter Officers

President.....Dave Casperson
Past Pres.Blake Wanger
Marketing/PR VP.....Steve Grady
VP Music /Perform.....Carl Pinard
VP Membership.....Neal Mortenson
Program VP.....Bill Dahl
Secretary.....Bill Walkowski
TreasurerAndy Richards
VP Technology.....Paul Swanson

Board Members

At-Large

David Paxson
Harvey Weiss
Dan Slattery
Dan Williams

Directors

Director.....Jamy Casperson
Assistant Director..... Dave Speidel

Section Leaders

Tenor Section LeaderSteve Grady
Lead Section Leader.Shawn Hunter
Bari Section LeadersDave Speidel
Assistant - Matt Richards

Bass Section Leaders.....Dave Casperson

Committee Chairmen

Altruistic Programs Chairman.....Denny Maas
Audio/Visual Mgr.....Kirk Douglas
2020 Show Chairman.....Andy Richards
Summer Afterglow Chairman.....Kaleb Smith
Attendance/Sgt.-at-Arms.....**Vacant**
BOTY Party Chairman.....Mark Ortenburger

Chord-Inator Staff

EditorShawn Hunter
Senior Columnist.....Jim Erickson
Chorus Manager.....Dan Slattery
Assistant - Neal Mortenson
Chorus Performance Managers.....John Lloyd
..... Bob Ostergaard
..... Harvey Weiss

Grants Research.....**Vacant**
Groupanizer Administrator.....Matt Richards
Harmony Foundation.....**Vacant**
HistorianDick Riemenschneider
Learning Tracks.....**Vacant**
Librarian.....Carl Pinard
Name TagsDan Slattery
Nut Sales Chairman..... Dick Riemenschneider
Northern Pines Brigade President.....Dave Speidel
Performance Mgr.....Paul Swanson
Presentation Chairman.....**Vacant**
Quartet Promotion.....**Vacant**
Riser Boss(temp).....Dan Cole
Singing Valentines.....Neal Mortenson
SunshineMark Bloomquist
Swipe EditorKaleb Smith
Tickets/A-Commodears President.....Diana Pinard
Uniform Committee Chairman.....**Vacant**
Uniforms (Dress & Casual).....Dan Williams

(Dykstra—continued)

A year later in 1958 the Bloomington -Richfield Chapter was chartered under the sponsorship of the Minneapolis Commodores. Five years later, Richfield was dropped from the chapter name. Sometime along the way Bloomington adopted the name “**Good Times Chorus**” which couldn’t have been more appropriate. The chapter gave up its charter a few years ago but a half dozen of its former members continue to be loyal attendees of the **Friday Lunch Bunch That Meets on Thursday (FLBTMOT)**. Two of those loyalists, **Jerry Larson** and **Wayne Rasmussen**, were stalwarts for many years in the vibrant chapter.

Next in line to charter was Minnetonka which received its charter in 1960 and has gone through some peaks and valleys during its 60 years of producing seventh chords. When I think of Minnetonka Barbershopping I think of **Bud Hertig, Remi Grones**, recruiter par excellence **Tom Wickenheiser**, and the wonderkind, **Russ Born**. I also think of the glory days of the chapter when they held their annual shows at **Orchestra Hall**. They’re struggling today but still active.

It wasn’t until 1978 that the next Twin City Area chapter, Prior Lake, came onto the scene. I really have no memory of that chapter probably because they folded just three years later. The Anoka County Chapter chartered in the late 1970s or early 80s but I can’t find any definite information about them. I know they didn’t last very long.

The most recent addition to Twin City Area Barbershop Harmony is the Great Northern Union chorus whimsically based in tiny Hilltop Minnesota. The chapter chartered in 1985 under the mantra “**Fun Through Musical Excellence**” and the leadership of **Roger Meyer** and

Kirk Lindberg among many others. The GNU Chapter was the first in the area, I believe, to include among a large part of its initial membership, Barbershoppers from other local chapters who wanted to sing with an auditioned group of singers. I remember that a goodly number of Commodores (especially front row performers) were among Hilltop’s charter members. The Great Northern Union has in the ensuing years become one of the Barbershop Harmony Society’s premier chapters in terms of competitive excellence. And they’re still going strong.

The Friday Lunch Bunch that Meets on Thursday, since its beginning in the middle 1960s, has played a primary role in facilitating communication among Twin City Area chapters. We’ve been fortunate to have representatives of each of the chapters I’ve mentioned as active members of the FLBTMOT during its 55 years of existence. The luncheon club was a brainchild of **Olaf Lee** and **Ed Peterka**, two long-time stalwarts of the Minneapolis Chapter. We began meeting on Fridays, then switched to Thursdays many years ago. And for all of these years (prior to the present pandemic) we met every week to get to know each other, to woodshed, to learn and sing a tag, and perhaps most importantly to share what’s going on in our home chapters. And while having all of this fun we’ve raised tens of thousands of dollars for Harmony Foundation. When the pandemic finally loses its hold on us, plan to stop in some Thursday at the **Moose on Monroe** and see for yourself what’s kept this group meeting on a regular basis for fifty-five years.



President's Corner



Spring is in the Air!

Hi Commodores,

As I write this (sorry it's late, Shawn!), the forecast today is for sunny skies and over 60 degrees here in Minnesota ... and we're in the first week of March. Wow! I'll take it!

Dave Casperson

Spring can mean many things for us, and it can conjure up many images and memories. Maybe some of you view spring as a time to start working in the yard or garden; perhaps for some it was always a sign that planting season was about to begin in the fields; many people see spring as a time to enjoy the outdoors – watching the animals scurry around, seeing the changes in nature around us, getting back out on the lake for fishing and recreation, enjoying our kids' spring sports activities, and the list goes on.

Regardless, spring is seen by most people as a time of renewal. Particularly in Minnesota, after we endure the bitter cold of the winter months, spring can be a great source cheer and optimism, to once again feel that warm breeze on your skin and the sun on our faces.

The Commodores also have many reasons to feel this same sense of optimism. We have a vibrant chapter of guys who genuinely care for each other, love to sing, and have a desire

to share our musical talent and genre with others. We now also have the opportunity to open a new chapter in the life of our chorus, as we wait to see where our new rehearsal "home" will be ... and when we can meet together in-person again and even perform for live crowds.

Let's use this springtime sense of optimism and renewal to propel the Commodores forward. Please continue inviting guests to our rehearsals. We will have more guest nights, but we don't limit guest visits to those dedicated events – they can come be our guest any time. Also, we have every reason to be excited about the

potential of singing together again this year, and in a new weekly rehearsal site. We are continuing to uncover potential spaces, and will update all of you as this unfolds.

I'm looking forward to a time when we can get back together, in-person and on the risers to share the fellowship we have missed so much ... and of course, to share a tag once again.

It's Great to be a Commodore!!

Are You Listening?

Jerry Frank

Do you hear what I hear? I doubt it. Sound hits our ear drums incessantly but our hearing is selective depending on our age, health and numerous other reasons. Beyond our physical equipment, we also have our filter system that just ignores those things that don't interest us. One thing that city dwellers notice when taking a hike through the woods is the "silence". Background noise is reduced so much that it startles the uninitiated. They no longer hear the sound that they have ignored for so long that it dropped from their awareness.

A still less understood effect is the difference between hearing and LISTENING. The ability to focus on the sounds that we hear such that we can remember them and possibly even repeat them is nearly a lost art. Knowledge of the sounds around you helps you understand them.

Case in point: After a performance years ago, a lady complimented the Firehouse Harmony Brigade chorus by telling me that she couldn't understand how we assembled so many men that had voices that blended so well together. I thanked her and then said that she didn't really understand what she was hearing. We were not men with much different voices, we had similar voices

but were singing different notes. Being a Lead, I grabbed three other parts and we did a quick demonstration of "Wild Irish Rose". We sang our individual parts separately. The lady then LISTENED as we sang together, moving from singer to singer to help accent the sound of each part. Her amazement and appreciation of the barbershop style left her even more impressed by our efforts.

One of the most frightening thing a salesman encounters is an educated customer that knows the product that he is attempting to sell. I have found that the "sale" of the barbershop style of music is the product that breaks the rule. I have found that the more educated the audience [is], the greater the appreciation. I feel that we have done our audience a disservice by avoiding educating them as to what they are hearing. We have not nurtured their ability to LISTEN to our music.

Unless we desire to end up just entertaining other performers, we need to educate our audience such that they can LISTEN to what they hear.

Editors note: Jerry's article is a bit abstract but it says a lot in just a few short words. You may have to read it twice to understand it but there is an underlying message that's worthy of consideration!



Shawn Hunter, Bulletin Editor
4125 Country View Dr.
Eagan, MN 55123
(651) 341-1373
Shawn.h.hunter@gmail.com



**1st CLASS
POSTAGE
HERE**

All copy and photos herein without a byline, as well as those opinions and commentaries under his byline, are the sole responsibility of the *Chord-Inator* Editor and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Minneapolis Chapter Board or its officers.

This logo is neither shared with the Girl Scouts nor dumped by the Sweet Adelines.

Logo courtesy of Bob Clark

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Chapter Quartets

To:

- BOMP
- Dan Cole.....612/940-4554
- EASY LISTENIN'
- Dan Slattery..... 651/747-6384
- JUST ONE MORE
- Nate Weimer.....316/204-8756
- SWYPE
- Mark Bloomquist.....952/541-0232
- SILVER SCREEN
- Steve Grady.....952/334-7500

LOOKING AHEAD

- Aug 12—Summer Sing-out, Eden Prairie
- Aug 26—Summer Sing-out, Hastings
- Sep 18 — Annual Show, Bethel University
- Oct 15-16—LOL District Convention, Rochester

The *Chord-Inator* is available on the Minneapolis Chapter's website minneapoliscommadores.org

**CHORD-INATOR
MINNEAPOLIS COMMODORES
Minneapolis Chapter of BHS
MEETING EVERY TUES -7:00
p.m.
LOCATION TBD
GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME**