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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

MAY 2021 - VOL. 77 - NO. 3



President's Corner



"Home, Sweet Home!"

Commodores:

Dave Casperson

As most of you know by now, we will have a new place to call home for our rehearsals going forward: Mayflower Community Congregational Church at 106 E. Diamond Lake Road in Minneapolis.

I would like to thank my fellow search committee members for their work on finding a new place for us to call home. **Mark Ortenburger, Blake Wanger** and **Dave Paxson** spent many hours on this process, starting with coming up with a list of places to approach, contacting those places, doing site visits and ultimately engaging in negotiations on rental pricing and other terms.

Dave Paxson was the one who

"found" Mayflower, and was able to quickly develop a relationship with their Director of Operations. Although there were several obstacles that could have gotten in the way of us renting rehearsal space at Mayflower, Dave was diligent and persistent (in a very kind and congenial way), and really did a nice job of shepherding the process through to the desired result. Please join me in thanking Dave for his effort!

I know that you are all excited to be singing together again, although we know that even once COVID safety guidelines are met, each person has their own comfort level regarding when they will want to rehearse in-person. For these reasons, I envision us having sort of a phased approach to rehearsing in-person as a group.

Mayflower has dedicated WiFi in several areas of their building, including the room where we will be rehearsing. This means that once we are back together, we will still be able to simulcast our rehearsals online for those who are still more comfortable staying home.

There is one thing relative to our new facility that I will ask of everyone to

be "on board" with: we will always be respectful of the property and rules of Mayflower, and we will always strive to leave the premises in better condition than we found it. It is very important to build a sense of good will by gaining Mayflower's trust, so they know we will not disrespect their property or use the space in ways that they have not permitted (I only say this because they have evidently had this problem with a long-term group that rented from them in the past).

Bottom line: let's show Mayflower our appreciation for their partnership with us by exemplifying our statement of being "congenial men of good character" in everything we do in their building. This will continue to build good will between our organizations and develop a strong partnership going forward. Let's always show them why...

...It's Great to Be a Commodore!!

Georgia Grind

By Jim Erickson, *BeatsMe Baritone*



Jim Erickson

Whence cometh the material? That's something I keep my ears perked up to catch—any new trends, ideas, humor, gossip, inspiration, and all the rest so I will have something to put in the next article. But somehow, the pandemic has created a dearth of things to say. Oh, I know! Get your shot so we can stymie the virus and ward off those new variants. Tell me why that's not a good idea regardless of what your political persuasion. And then, let's get on with fighting this excruciating disease. We, myself included, have lost too many friends and relatives and suffered too much handwringing over jobs, culture, family, and almost everything else including those surprising things we just did not foresee affecting us in untold ways.

You remember some hoarders buying pallets of toilet paper in the early stages of 19 and then realizing they overdid their purchases, tried to return them to Costco and other retailers? Those retailers finally refused to take the items back to discourage such practices in the future. There were other initial shortages of masks and hundreds of other items that took months to begin to restock. So many involving items to treat the infected as well as everyone else.

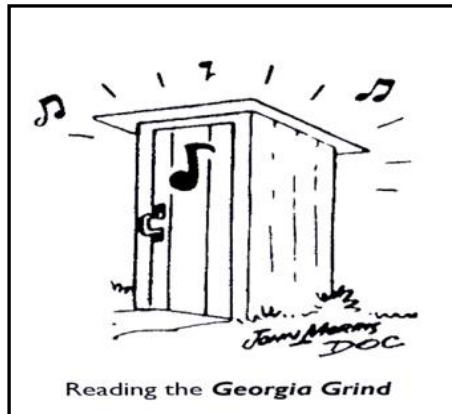
Not a surprise to many, some businesses suffered as they laid off employees and are now having little success finding enough employees to operate on any kind of basis. So, operations throughout the nation and world struggle to do what they need to and as a consequence, quirky shortages keep popping up.

We all understand why there is a run on chicken wings at Superbowl time. But now, chicken, and the wings thereof, are still a short supply that's getting shorter. I won't go into the reasons, but they are directly related

to 19. Not sure if they will ever breed four-winged chickens, but maybe a cross with octopuses would result in eight long wings. They might suck and stick to your plate, but are much less likely to spill after a crucial touchdown.

And just the other day, there were reports of a small glass jar and bottles shortage resulting in longer delivery times of months. Home canners are being warned to stock up on jars before they are gone and usual summer canning is impossible. Small distilleries are on a wait list for bottles to bottle their vodka, gin, and all other such liquors. No bottles, no sales. Simple as that. And the list goes on and on with shortages occurring in some of the most unexpected places.

Comparing all of that to learning to strengthen your flaccid vocal cords by



sucking through a straw as recommended in the Harmonizer seems like a lot of something about not very much. And yet, what the world needs now, is song, sweet song. Who can provide that? Well, Barbershoppers for one. As performers, we need to do what we can to lift the spirits of the nation (and our own!). So, step up and work on that straw sucking.

OK. I tried the straw thing. Unfortunately, mumbling to myself was not keeping my aryepiglottic sphincter in shape, as **Paul Wigley** would proclaim. I need to whip it into for when we begin rehearsing in assembled groups again. (Shots, people!) We zoomed in, but it will probably be some time before we zoom out.

This straw thing seemed like such a

simple approach as a remedy for singing wilt. (Just as simple as realizing that with fewer people dining out, but rather ordering curbside, etc., those little packets of ketchup (or catsup, if you please) would become rare due to demand and command unthinkable prices on E-bay and elsewhere. Not me, but some friends were known to search any cars they could get access to, to mine ketchup packets that may have fallen on the floor between the seats. Those with kids found the back seat to be a panacea of the condiment. Both for catsup, mustard, and sometimes that tasteless syrup and salt/pepper packets—no report on whether those latter were also treasured finds.)

Let's see. Where did I leave off? Oh, right. The voice-building straw exercise device. So simple. Just get a straw and blow or whatever called for. Well first of all, I learned that not just any old straw will do. The Slurpy size straw—about as big around as a wooden pencil—was deemed to be too large. Probably leading to early exhaustion, dizziness and a foggy mind (similar to Covid19 brain-fog.....see what I did there? SHOTS, people!). Next, the short straw used to stir cream in your coffee would be too restrictive and blowing would result in the same symptoms. Besides, my good wife and I don't use cream in our coffee so we have no such straws lying around, and danged if I am going to search the car floor of some cream-drinking friend to see if such a straw—new or used—was carelessly dropped on their floor. Again, no report on whether such skinny, short straws are hard to get.



**Minneapolis, Minn. Chapter
Land O'Lakes District, BHS**
Meetings every Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.
Mayflower Congregational Church
106 Diamond Lake Rd E
Minneapolis, MN 55419

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(Grind, cont'd)

So, it came down to finding a straw like the old paper straws whose size was in between the coffee swizzle straw and the Slurpy. The medium-size straws are probably all plastic now except for the planet-saving, stainless steel, reusable straw. Yoiks! (Couldn't think of the word I really wanted.) I found a foot-long, just-the-right-size, straw in the back of our kitchen utensil drawer. Frugally cutting the straw in half and taping one half inside my chorus song notebook, I took the other half and began my exercise. All the time thinking this was some kind of Barbershop practical joke.

I still don't know if it is or was, but like all other exercise programs I have gotten into over the years, my dusty Nordic Track, Kettle ball, barbells, etc., now have a new companion. A six-inch straw. But I still have my good intentions.

Enough for now. Even in a pandemic, I want you to know I have scratched doggedly to come up with something to write about. Even packets of Ketchup. You're welcome.

For now, then, keep adding to your bucket list and "hold fast to that which is good." Remember, Barbershopping is one of those good things. Slowly, too, I am able to continue my research on the origins of the **Georgia Grind** and "unmask" so many false leads. Value and guarding the truth, as you know, is what the Grind is about.

Take care and know this is not the last straw—just a kind of short one.

Hunter's Bullseye



Shawn Hunter

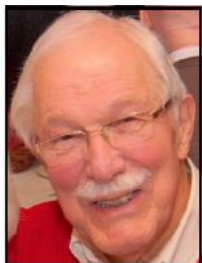
Hang in there, my brothers! As I write this, the end of the long Covid winter is fast approaching us, thank God. With the first, limited in-person rehearsal at the High School in May, it really is starting to feel like we are emerging from our health-induced cocoon.

It is time to blow the dust off of our most important musical instrument, our EARS. Singing live with other people for the first time in over a year has taught me that my listening skills are really rusty. It is one thing to practice with learning tracks, but I was really struggling with hearing and balancing with other singers. A wise man once told me that God gave you 2 ears for a reason....so you can listen twice as hard as you sing.

Speaking of singing, thanks to **Dave Speidel** for hosting 10 hearty souls for a weekend of live singing "up north". This group of barbershoppers from the **Northern Pines Harmony Brigade** joined up to warble a few of the "old songs" from past brigades and had a blast. We even managed to "sing out" at a number of watering holes in northern Wisconsin.

I can report from personal experience that it takes a few hours to get back in-sync, but it does return. There is nothing quite like ringing chords live with other men. Hang in there, my Brothers!

Musings from a Barbershop Curmudgeon



A Look Back at the Armed Forces Collaboration Program

Bob Dykstra

In 1949 the Chief of the United

States Army Recreational Service and the Chief of the Army Music Section attended the annual International Barbershop Convention in Buffalo, New York and asked to meet with the Society Board of Directors. They proposed that SPEBSQSA work with them in organizing quartets on military posts and bases. As a result of this meeting a program involving active cooperation was negotiated between the Army and the Barbershop Society. It was agreed that the military would provide quartet learning materials and song arrangements and that the Society would provide top quality Barbershop quartets to tour military bases. This program came to be known as the Armed Forces Collaboration Program which soon encompassed the Navy and the Air Force as well.

One of the “goodies” provided by the armed services was a monthly songbook entitled the “Armed Forces Song Folio” which regularly included at least one Barbershop arrangement by **Dr. Bud Arberg**, as well as production notes and suggestions for soldiers at bases wanting to produce their own shows. My research suggests that these monthly folios were issued from 1951 to 1964 and that close to 150 Arberg Barbershop arrangements were included within them. I was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas in 1952-54, singing in the **Hut Four Quartet**, and we looked forward to the monthly folios and performed many songs from them.

The overall plan called for chapters in

communities with nearby army bases to advise Army Special Services Officers in the development of recreational music, specifically Barbershop. **Dean Snyder**, a well-known Washington, D.C. Barbershopper, in an early report on the Collaboration Program (December 1949 Harmonizer) cautioned that “our primary emphasis will not be providing entertainment to an audience, but rather on demonstrating what fun it is to sing Barbershop music and how to go about doing so.....thus encouraging Army groups to get started on their own. A whole new generation of practitioners of the Barbershop art can be trained in this manner.” It’s clear that SPEBSQSA’S reason for getting involved in the collaborative program went far beyond that of raising morale in the military; many leaders saw this as a way of significantly increasing membership in the Society.

As mentioned earlier another important part of the program was the Society’s making available top-notch quartets to entertain servicemen all around the world. Among the quartets who volunteered and consequently made morale-boosting appearances at military bases in Europe, Alaska, Japan, Korea, and doubtless other places in the world were the **Harmony Halls**, the **Schmitt Brothers**, the **Buffalo Bills**, the **Cardinals** and the **Midstates Four**. A major sticking point arose rather quickly, however. The Army (and later the Navy and Air Force) picked up expenses for quartets once they left the United States. Quartet members, however, were responsible for the expenses of getting to the point of embarkation and were not reimbursed for the loss of income resulting from their absence from their jobs during their tour. The Society tried to elicit funds to make up for such loss of income but with little success. As a result by 1953 this aspect of the Collaboration Program was suspended at least as far as overseas quartet tours were concerned.

Another apparent reason for the elimi-

nation of overseas tours by Society quartets is that there appeared to be a fundamental difference between the Society and the Armed Forces about the objectives of the program. According to **Will Cook** in “Melodies for Millions: A Twenty-five Year History,” the Society felt it was not only doing a morale-building job for the armed forces but that a secondary function of the quartet tours was of a missionary nature.” That is, servicemen should not only be entertained, but should be introduced to the Society and the merits of self-entertainment with Barbershop harmony. Cook suggests that the armed forces were not interested in the “missionary” aspects of the program and perceived little difference between the touring quartets and USO performances. In Cook’s words, “the Society, however, refused to have its quartets sponsored by the USO because its top officials were leery about having our organization identified with dancing girls and uninhibited comedians.”

Although the Society decided not to continue supplying overseas military bases with touring quartets, other aspects of the Armed Forces Collaboration Program continued for some time. I’ve already mentioned the highly popular and useful Song Folios with Barbershop arrangements that were issued monthly into the early 1960s. Also the establishment of Barbershop quartets on bases continued to be encouraged. The Hut Four, for example, organized at Fort Riley, Kansas with the help of **Sam Cohen** and the Junction City Chapter. **John Hansen**, the architect of the quartet, was assigned by the Army to Special Services, the entertainment branch of the Army, shortly after his arrival at Fort Riley.

(Dykstra, cont'd)

As part of his duties he set up and encouraged participation in a gang singing event on base. The music he led us in singing was primarily Barbershop. At the conclusion of the night's activities, John announced his intention to form a Barbershop quartet and invited anyone interested in being part of it to talk to him. I responded to his invitation and immediately was the lead in the Hut Four, which sang together for the duration of our army tours of duty. John, who remained in Special Services, was clearly our leader and a top-notch bass singer. The other three of us in the quartet (tenor **Herb Fane**, baritone **Bob Moksnes** and me) were not assigned to Special Services, but were routinely released from our daily duties when a quartet appearance was scheduled either locally or in distant venues like New York City or Washington, D.C., where our role as a quartet was to entertain and extol the virtues of army life.

It's apparent that the Collaboration Program was active on other military bases as well. The December 1951 issue of the Harmonizer, for example, has a page featuring photos of quartets stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Fort Worden, Washington, and Camp Gordon, Georgia among other installations. In 1954 the Hut Four was asked to collaborate with an Air Force quartet (whose name escapes me) on an instructional video concerning Barbershopping in the service. We were sent to Washington, D.C. to attend the annual SPEBSQSA convention as the official Army quartet representative and the other quartet, I'm sure, was the official Air Force quartet. Incidentally, our host and producer of the video was none other than Bud Arberg, the arranger of the Barbershop music in the Armed Forces Song Folio.

Undoubtedly the best-known product of the Army/SPEBSQSA coopera-

tion was the **Four Teens**. The quartet along with friend **Mike Egan**, all from Eau Claire, Wisconsin enlisted in the Air Force as a group in 1951 hoping to stay together while in service. They soon lost their bass who was discharged for medical reasons. They found a replacement and were heard singing in a show at Scott Air Force Base in Missouri by **Norman Rathert**, who was a member of the St. Louis chapter and former International President of SPEBSQSA. Rathert at the time was helping one of the generals at the Air Force Base to stage shows for military personnel. He started coaching the Four Teens and then convinced the general in charge of Special Services at Scott to assign the entire quartet to Special Services which allowed them to rehearse many hours a day. To make a long story short the Four Teens proceeded to win the 1952 International Quartet Gold Medal in their first attempt. The only other service quartet to medal in International competition was the **Air Fours** from the Belleville, Illinois chapter who finished fourth in 1955. It should also be noted that in 1953 the Air Force conducted a world-wide Barbershop contest among its bases to choose an overall champion quartet. It's readily apparent that Barbershop quartetting really caught on during the Collaboration Project, at least in the Army and Air Force.

One interesting corollary of the relative success that military quartets were having in Barbershop competition was a judging change sometime in the middle 50s that prohibited the wearing of military uniforms on the contest stage. I'm not sure of the exact date nor the reasons for the change, but it had to be after 1955 because the Air Fours wore uniforms when they medaled that year.

In wrapping up this discussion of the Armed Forces Collaboration Program one more thing should be said. You will remember that I stated that as part of the program the Army

wished to put quartet tours to military bases under the auspices of the USO but the Society would have no part of it. However, some years later, in 1967 the **Merry Mugs** of Kansas City became the first Society quartet to embark on a USO tour of the Far East. Many more quartets were to follow them including my quartet, the Hut Four, which took two such tours in 1968 and 1970. We went to Japan, Okinawa, Guam, and the Philippines for seventeen days each time to entertain hospitalized servicemen who had been wounded in battle in Viet Nam. And in contrast to its earlier position, the Society merely asked our quartets to entertain with no accompanying mandate to spread the gospel of Barbershopping. I consider myself very fortunate to have participated as a quartet member in both the Armed Forces Collaboration Program of the early 1950s and the SPEBSQSA/USO partnership of the late 1960s.

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Logo courtesy of Bob Clark

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- 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

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