

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

JULY 2021 - VOL. 77 - NO. 4



President's Corner



**Ready to Roar
Back!"**

Dave Casperson

Commodores,

It has been so great to be able to rehearse together in-person, and without masks! Our attendance has been great, and it's just so nice to be able to hear the chords ringing around us once again.

As **Jay Althoff** (president of LOL) has been envisioning, the LOL district is ready to "Roar Back", and viewing it from where I sit, the Commodores are right in step with that mission.

It's exciting to think that we have several shows coming up in August, and we're getting ready for our annual show in September. After that, it will be on to the LOL District Convention. We have so many things to look forward to, and I hope all of you share that same optimism and excitement.

Remember to keep sharing our passion for barbershop by inviting other singers to come and experience our chapter. We have so much to offer not only our audiences, but our current and future members. Let's keep spreading the word!

It's Great To Be A Commodore!



With Sorrow.....

Jeffrey B. Vander Plaats, age 60, of St. Cloud was born on April 24, 1961 in Minneapolis to Alvin and Evelyn (Van Dellen) Vander Plaats. He graduated from Edina East High School. Jeff married Kathryn on May 30, 2014 in St. Cloud. He owned and operated his own ALSON's Transport trucking business for over 6 years.

Jeff enjoyed telling jokes, singing, racing, golfing, hockey, and downhill skiing. He is survived by his wife, Kathryn of St. Cloud; children, Abigail Vander Plaats of St. Paul and Samuel Vander Plaats of Chanhassen; step children, Nathan (Bernadette) Warnert of Sartell, Kate (fiancé Johan Sogge) Warnert of Cold Spring, Matthew (fiancée Leah Clark) Warnert of Buffalo; six grandchildren; parents, siblings, Scott Vander Plaats of Buffalo, Amy (Bill) Vander Velde of Belmont, MI; and extended family and friends.

Georgia Grind

By Jim Erickson, *Beat The Heat*
Baritone



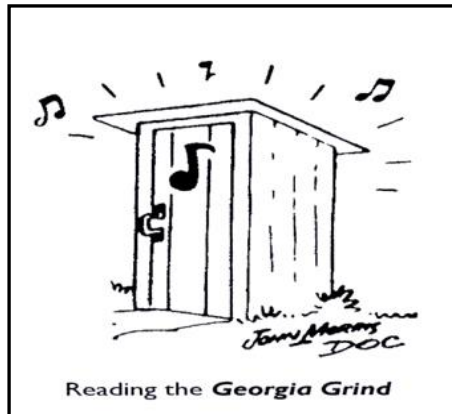
Jim Erickson

OK! Before I get into the real “meat” of this article, I wish to add a footnote to my immediately previous article discussing my experience of blowing through a short straw to maintain and enhance my voice in overcoming its erosion due to too many pandemic, non-voice dalliances. I am intentionally disregarding the argument, “Should a footnote always come at the end of a page or article?” as I really don’t give a whit. Continuing on, the straw technique is one used by opera singers and others who have an interest in finding the least mundane way to keep America singing. If that isn’t enough background to get you into what I am about to reveal to you, let me encourage you to reread my earlier, penultimate article.

A Commodore (One we all know and love, but who is too humble to allow me to reveal his identity—but I will for \$20 per inquirer) was generous enough to direct me to some internet videos and other information so I could become the **Charles Atlas** of the baritone world in case some burly bass kicked sand in my face (throat) at the beach. (I apologize to those who came into this world after the age of kid’s comic books wherein an ad always appeared for bodybuilding based on the story of a weakling guy with a comely swimsuit-clad girl friend at the beach. A well-built bully (to impress the girl in question) kicks sand in the face of the weakling. Weeks later, after the used-to-be weakling but now amazingly-built specimen due to the Hero **Charles Atlas Bodybuilder program**—available for purchase—puts the bully in his place, gets the girls and lives buffly ever after. I think that Commodore (hint, hint) may have given me that stuff to show what a newly minted, responsible, baritone would do, but perhaps I am reading too much into his intentions. No, that wasn’t the “footnote” to which I re-

ferred, but as you may notice, it’s getting closer to its place at the end of the page or article all the time.

You know, by the time I tell you what the footnote is after all of the above clutter, it seems to wane in importance or compelling reader interest. Well, here goes, anyway. I had cut my straw to a suitable length and began learning how to sing some polecats through it. Things seemed to progress quite well, I would say, after going through several “cats” and finally patting myself on the back for a job well done. A little later, I was chatting with my good wife, **Mary**, and she said, “What was that NOISE I just heard?” “Noise?” I answered. “What noise?” “Well, I couldn’t tell for sure, but it sure sounded like our neighbor’s chain saw cutting up that big tree he just felled.”



Next time, I think I will practice in a more secluded, sound-absorbing spot...

In the meantime, I have to admit I am succumbing to climate change. My wife and I were pretty good about following the pandemic guidelines and stayed under cover for several months awaiting the magic time when we could resume being with many others in the outdoors, attending events where many turned out and lingered to see what conversing face-to-face was like once again, and all the other strategies we engaged in to conquer the virus spread. Only to have to retreat inside due to the second hottest June on record since some time in the 1800’s. Oh, don’t tell me that old married woman’s tale, that the hotter it is, the better and energetic you feel. You

are really just trying to one-up me, make me appear a weakling, or arrogantly lying. Or have situational relationship issues which correspond to the ice in your veins. Me? I just wilt, seek all shade, drink quarts of **Mango Iced Tea** and camp in the cool breezes of the air conditioner vent. Even a swim in a Minnesota lake is more like a bath with the only advantage being the live mallard duckies in with me instead of the mute, yellow duckies.

Remember last winter when we were semi-hallucinating, mumbling almost incoherent words like, “Another week like this and those big mosquitos don’t look like a bad tradeoff.” What were we thinking? Well, maybe it was that you can use bug repellent, but “heat” repellent is isolated to non-existent. And we all know what a sharp rise in the dew point does to fire up pain from humidity-laden summer air.

Sorry, but I am taking a break right now to stand in front of the open refrigerator. While I am cooling, think about adding to your Barbershop bucket list, valuing the truth and holding fast to that which is good. Now, let me see. Where did I put that travel itinerary for the two month long stay in Antarctica? With the climate warming, I want to do some research on the treasures related to the Georgia Grind as the ice packs rapidly retreat. If furry mastodons emerge from the ice, who knows what we might find about the Grind. A “**Grind Find.**” I’d better tuck that in my notes...

Stay cool!



**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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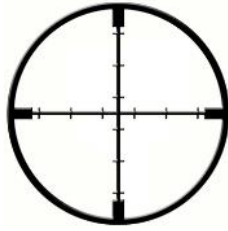
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Hunter's Bullseye



Shawn Hunter

Man oh man, I just can't believe that our chorus is almost 100% vaccinated and back at it like nothing happened. As I watch (and participate) in "knocking the rust off" I am amazed how fast things are coming back together. Just think, in just a couple of

weeks we have a flurry of summer shows, moving right into our big annual show, and then the Convention. Whew!

I know The Commodores are well up to the task and I am proud to sing with each and every one of you. Thanks for rolling up your sleeves (literally, in this case) and quickly getting back into performance shape. This will be a fun, memorable stretch. Let's make it the very best for our audiences.

The Minneapolis Commodores



2021 Family & Friends Appreciation Night

and

Barbershopper of the Year Celebration

Celebrating our honorees from 2020 and 2021

Sunday, August 22, 2021

Mancini's Char House

531 West Seventh Street

St. Paul, MN 55102

Cocktails	4:30 p.m.
Entertainment	5:30 p.m.
Dinner	6:00 p.m.
Program	7:00 p.m.

Entertainment provided by:

CHORD SMASH

Additional information will be available in mid-July from our website or any Commodore member



From Fearless Leader...



Jamye Casperson

So where does our chorus go now?

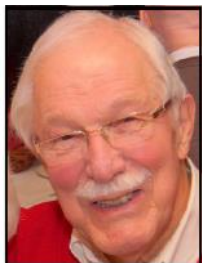
I bet this question has been asked many times in the last few weeks by almost every chorus (and I don't just mean barber-shop choruses). After 15 months of not singing together in person and how the world has changed since then, some people would argue that it is a time to revamp and refocus. I, on the other hand, believe that it is the perfect time to do what we were doing but with more joy, more gratitude and more passion than ever before. We need to sing TOGETHER. Together is defined as "with other people and into companionship". Synonyms

are "as one," "united," "with one voice," and "collectively." Nowhere in the definition of together does it say that one person is better than someone else or one person has to be/think/live identical to someone else. In a world where we are asked to spend energy noticing differences, I would suggest that we spend our energy as a chorus focusing on the things that bring us TOGETHER: singing barbershop, acapella, harmony, brotherhood, friendship and sharing the joy of this music with people around us. Invite the singers that you know to come and rehearse with us on Tuesday nights...we might be the only place that people can escape the world around us and actually be TOGETHER.

- T: Talented**
- O: Optimistic**
- G: Generous**
- E: Encouraging**
- T: Thankful**
- H: Hard working**
- E: Entertaining**
- R: Resilient**



Musings from a Barbershop Curmudgeon



Bob Dykstra

I mentioned in a previous “musing” that according to Bob Spong’s records the Hut Four traveled well over 400,000 miles in their almost twenty years of performing. We obviously spent a great deal of time in automobiles, commercial aircraft, and private planes getting to performance sites, and had some interesting and unusual experiences along the way. Allow me to share a few of these that are forever implanted in my memory.

Most of our shows, especially in the early days, were in the Midwest during the winter months, and in our opinion, within driving distance. You’ll recall that in the 1950s freeways were a rarity and major roads ran through towns and cities which had very strict speed limits. So we spent a lot of time in our automobiles driving to and from our many Saturday evening Barbershop gigs. To complicate matters our tenor in the early days, Johnnie Wheeler, was a soloist in a major downtown Minneapolis church and had to be back for service(s) every Sunday morning. That meant whenever the Afterglow ended (we never asked to sing early), we’d ring one last tag with a “local” (or two or three)”, finish our drinks (except for our bari, Don Sundt who always took one with him) and begin our long journey home.

Amazingly, we never had an accident, never ran out of gas, never were picked up for speeding, and never had a car break down in the

middle of the night in the middle of nowhere. We doubtless should have “stayed put” on more than one occasion. For example, I specifically remember that John Hansen had a Dodge convertible whose lights would occasionally “conk out” unexpectedly, but (stupidly) it didn’t hold us back. Winter in the Midwest provided plenty of obstacles, and collectively, we were not particularly gifted as night-time drivers. Don Sundt and I could usually handle our assigned shifts behind the wheel but were unlikely to volunteer for additional stints. Bob Spong was usually good for a half hour at best and even then couldn’t be trusted to keep us on the right road. John was our most reliable driver by far, managing to take over for longer periods of time, and being willing and able to fill in for the rest of us when fatigue made us even more of a driving risk. John’s unique ability in this regard was a major surprise to us because he was well-known for falling asleep at afterglows and other places at a moment’s notice. Despite that quirk, however, we never were concerned about his ability to drive us through the night.

Driving to the show site also was a tiresome task, but we figured out a few ways to pass the time. We spent many hours playing a form of poker we developed that allowed the driver to play along with a minimum of distraction. Each player was dealt two cards, one up and one down. A round of betting followed the deal after which each player had two opportunities to replace either of his two cards, each opportunity again followed by a round of betting. A pair of aces was the best high hand possible; flushes and straights did not

exist. We named the game O’Gorman in honor of our good friend, Bob O’Gorman, the tenor of the Mel-O-Dons from Cannon Falls, although I can’t remember why.

We also played a spelling game in which someone started the game by naming a single letter. The object of the game was to add a letter to the previous letter(s) without finishing a word. But one had to have a word in mind because he could be challenged by the player whose turn it was to play, and if he couldn’t name a legitimate word that included the letter sequence to that point (including the letter he just added), he lost the game. The game went on until a successful challenge was made or until a player could not add a letter without completing the spelling of a legitimate word.

As we became better known we sang on Parades throughout the United States and Canada and spent more travel time in airplanes. Our favorite pilot was Bob Henry who flew us many miles in a single engine plane, a Cessna 195. Bob was not only a good pilot but an accomplished story teller as well. One night we sang at a Lion’s Club affair in Winnipeg and we talked Bob into sharing some of his stories with the audience to give us a break occasionally on what was to be a long and tiring performance. He did an admirable job.

(Dykstra, cont'd)

We had a few adventures I recall. One midweek evening we were to sing in Portage, Wisconsin late in the fall and darkness overtook us before we made it to the little unlit airfield. We finally spotted a strip with vehicles with their headlights on lined up at one end of the field to provide some illumination for landing and Bob brought us to the ground without incident. We also had to land a few times because of icing on the wings and ended up driving home with a rental car. I also remember a trip to St. Louis for a Barbershop show when the engine stopped over a heavily-wooded area, but started up again quickly. Bob immediately told us that he had to switch from one fuel tank to another. I wish he had told us BEFORE the engine stopped!

Despite an occasional "close call" we had complete confidence in Bob and never considered him reckless in any way. We were confident that he wouldn't fly in too dangerous conditions. Of course, we were young and had the "nothing can happen to us" mentality so common among young "macho" males. I'm sure we occasionally flew in conditions that we would never have agreed to fly in 25 years later. But we were often the headline quartet on shows we were heading for and definitely felt an obligation to get there if we possibly could.

We lost track of Bob Henry when the Hut Four retired in 1972. Many years later, my wife, Lou, was working as a nurse at North Memorial Hospital and entered the room of one of her patients. The patient noticed the name "Dykstra" on Lou's name badge

and asked if she knew a Bob Dykstra who was a Barbershop quartet singer. Sure enough, it was "our" Bob Henry who was dying of cancer. He passed away a few days later before Bob, Dan, John and I were able to visit him.

A few other incidents involving air travel come to mind. On our first Winnipeg show by private plane we almost had to leave as soon as we landed because we lacked some authorizing paperwork. Fortunately, I had made some very good friends in Winnipeg when my wife delivered my son there and I had to go through the rigamarole of getting the two of them out of Canada. Collectively my Barbershop friends had enough influence to allow us to stay and do the show.

(An aside: My life Lou was singing with a Sweet Adelines quartet, the Nota-Rieties, in 1961 when the quartet competed in Regional competition in Winnipeg. Lou was 8 1/2 months pregnant at the time, she performed while experiencing some labor pains, went to the hospital immediately after singing, delivered my son Paul, and found out they had won the contest! I was back in Minneapolis watching over our daughter, Kim, flew to Winnipeg, and with the help of Barbershoppers and Sweet Adelines brought my wife and Canadian son home.)

I remember some chagrin when we were scheduled to sing in Holland, Michigan one Saturday and our pilot at the time was busy crop dusting. The owner of the airplane sent in his stead a mechanic which caused some consternation. Was this guy a licensed pilot? Was he an experi-

enced pilot? Dare we fly with him especially since we had to cross Lake Michigan to get there? We really had no choice so we climbed on the plane. We really had no reason to be concerned. John Hansen had been taking some flying lessons and he offered to ride in the co-pilot's seat. Worry? Us? No problem. The flight was routine.

One other experience with a private plane and its pilot (not Bob Henry) involved a flight to a show in Cleveland, Ohio. The hotel at which we stayed also played host to a women's state bowling tournament. Our pilot quite obviously stayed up rather late (we're quite sure partying with the ladies) and we had to rouse him from a deep sleep quite early in the morning because we had to fly to Davenport, Iowa, for a Sunday afternoon show. The flight was uneventful but we were concerned as I'm sure the FAA would have been had they known. That afternoon's show was also the site of a memorable on-stage incident. Bob Spong closed the show with his wonderful solo rendition of "The Three Bells." The other three of us basically hummed harmony as Bob told the beautiful story in song about the life of "Jimmy Brown." There were three verses to the song which ended with an exuberant tag, triggered musically by a move John made as part of the bass harmony. On this afternoon John lost track of the verses and made his move after the second verse completely throwing Bob for a loop and making it virtually impossible for him to recapture the correct key in which to sing the third verse. Bob took a couple of stabs at starting the verse while the other three of us

(Dykstra, cont'd)

hid behind him on stage hoping for the best. He finally found a key that was somewhat to his liking, we gradually moved into his key as well, and we finished the song in a somewhat hit-and-miss fashion. After the show Bob was told by a member of the audience that he had never heard anything so beautiful in his life.

The closest we ever came to missing a show happened on our way to Hartford, Connecticut. We were scheduled to change planes somewhere en route (I can't remember where) and the flight we were to take to Hartford was delayed for a few hours. We happened to run into Dennis Taylor, an old Barbershopping friend from Kansas City, who had a room at the airport motel and offered it to us so we could relax while waiting for the delayed flight. We made arrangements with someone at the airport check-in to call us in the room when the plane arrived. They didn't. Being the worry wart that I am, at some point I called to check flight status and was told that the plane was there, passengers were boarding, and the flight would be leaving soon. I quickly awoke the other three and we headed to the boarding area. The doors to the plane were already closed and the plane was ready to take off. An employee of the airline allowed us to accompany him to the tarmac and he persuaded the pilot to delay his take-off so we could board. On the plane were the Night Hawks from Toronto who were also headed to Hartford to sing on the same show. I don't think they, nor the other passengers, were pleased with the delay.

One last travel adventure comes to mind. Sometime around July 1, 1954, our Fort Riley tenor, Herb Fane, was discharged from the army and Bob Moksnes and I both went home on leave since the Hut Four had sung its last seventh chord. Our quartet career spanned about 17 months but they had been busy months with three trips to New York City to appear on live national television, a week spent at the 1954 International Barbershop Convention in Washington, D.C., and a busy five days in attendance at the St. Paul Winter Carnival, all in our military roles as army recruiters. Now we could relax for our last three months of army duty. Or so we thought. Bob and I had hardly arrived home when John Hansen called to tell us we had one last gig in New York City to perform on Arlene Francis' recruiting show, "Soldier Parade." Our response was identical. "How can we sing? We don't have a tenor."

John smugly replied, "Oh yes, we do. I've found somebody and we've been doing a little harmonizing. He'll be fine." The recruit in question was Johnnie Wheeler and I honestly don't know how or where John found him on the base, but it was clear that John had committed us to an appearance on "Soldier Parade" hosted by Arlene Francis. So Bob and I cut our furloughs short and headed back to Fort Riley. We met Johnnie for the first time at the Manhattan, Kansas airport on our way to New York City. Can you imagine the four of us sitting on a plane heading to New York to appear on live national television without ever having met each other let alone sung together. Fortunately, we had the better part of a

week before show time to decide what to sing and to discover that actually we harmonized very well together. We eventually settled on "Dream" as our song choice and proceeded to perform it for the first time to a studio audience at ABC and all television viewers tuned in to ABC at that time.

Well.....as the old saying goes.....All's well that ends well.

With Sorrow.....

John O Bergseth. Age 89, of Golden Valley passed away Nov. 18. John loved his family and is remembered for his fun-loving nature, tinkering and ability to create anything out of scrap metal. John was the ultimate handyman, friend and inventor. Preceded in death by parents, 2 sisters and other loved ones. Survived by wife, Arlene; children, Susan (Joe) Linn, Nancy (Rich) Wallace, Barb Bergseth (Tom Campbell) and John D. Bergseth; 7 grandchildren; 4 great grandchildren; brother Sevald, and beloved nieces and nephews.

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HERE**

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To:

- BOMP
- Dan Cole.....612/940-4554
- EASY LISTENIN'
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- Nate Weimer.....316/204-8756
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- Steve Grady.....952/334-7500

LOOKING AHEAD

- Aug 9—BHS Open golf tournament, Elk River
- Aug 10—Summer Sing-out, Como
- Aug 12—Summer Sing-out, Eden Prairie
- Aug 22—BOTY, Macinis
- Aug 26—Summer Sing-out, Hastings
- Sep 18 —Annual Show, Bethel University
- Oct 15-16—LOL District Convention, Bloomington
- Dec. 11—Christmas Show

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