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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

JUNE 2022 - VOL. 78 - NO. 3



President's Corner



Harvey Weiss

Three minutes to excellence

Thanks to all those who contributed "Nuggets" suggestions of things we should be doing. Here are some of them.

- Breathing exercises once a month
- Add Minnesota rouser to summer shows
- Have more fun (lots of these)
- Have a quartet night 4-5 times a year
- Assign a tag-meister with a new tag each week

- More responsibilities for section leaders
 - Strategic membership plan for 1-5-10 years
 - New member night
 - Annual family picnic
 - New member suggestions:
 - Lowered expectations
 - Small song list
 - Retention protocols
 - Learn music in accordance with director's off- paper deadlines
 - Understand difference between practice and rehearsal
 - Some time for basic music theory concepts
 - Consider more diversity including possibly women
 - Sing tags before rehearsal
 - More benefit concerts
 - Member input on song selections
 - More quarteting
 - Team-building competition events by section
 - Membership recruitment committee
- To begin to address the many "have more fun" comments, I am endorsing the suggestion to periodically have "Quartet Night".
- We need a volunteer to step up to handle all the details that will be needed to make it a fun evening. There are some veteran members who have done this before, so I would ask them to volunteer a few hours to spear head this fun night.
- All other issues can be put before the Board to prioritize and see if there is something they want to start a conversation about.
- My many thanks to all those who participated in this uncharted journey. Let's start the 2nd Quarter with more good ideas from our members. See you next Tuesday.
- Harvenor

**IT'S GREAT TO BE A
COMMODORE!!!**

**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

Land O' Lakes Distric

Virtual Leadership Academy

(By President Harvey)

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On January 8th, 2022, the LOL District Leadership Academy was hosted via Zoom for all District Chapters. There were 105 participating in the classes, including Secretary, Treasurer, and a general session for all others. **Bob Cox**'s class on "Rebuilding Your Chapter After The Pandemic" had 75 participating, in which he stressed the need for everyone to work together as a team.

Commodores attending the Saturday morning session were, Andy **Richards**, Treasurer; **Bill Walkowski** Secretary; **Dave Casperson** VP for the Music Committee; **Tony Mason**, Executive Vice-President, and **Harvey Weiss**, Chapter President. I asked them to summarize some golden nuggets that they could share with us, and some of their remarks are as follows. (these sessions were recorded if you are interested, on the District web site, at loldistrict.org)

Bill Walkowski's Secretary class, was led by **Tim Schubbe** of the Mankato Chapter. Most of the Training centered around how to navigate the newly revised BHS Member Center Website. (i.e. compliance documents, officer reporting, and individual simple edits.) The Chapter Secretary is also responsible for filling out the annual ASCAP forms and BMI forms for each major event.

Andy Richards attended the Treasurer's track. It covered reminders on tax reporting forms used for directors, quartets, or anyone paid over \$600.00 a year. Also, summaries on the nuts and bolts of the Job, which constitutes writing checks, balancing the check book and running monthly reports.

Dave Casperson, Music VP, and Tony Mason, Executive Vice President, found position-specific training lacking and would have preferred it to return to the in-person mode as before. Most of the time was devoted to general membership training, which Dave said he had heard before.

Regarding the role of the President, I was referred to the Chapter President Workbook on the district website for a summary of my responsibilities. Since I have no vote on any of the chapter business, except in case of ties, I am to chair all Board and member meetings, am a member of all committees and am responsible for attending any scheduled training of education related to Chapter administration and advancement. There is a lot more, but I will forego boring you with a lot of it.

“On the Road” at the 2022 Annual Show

The Minneapolis Commodores Present
Great Venues - Songs Across America
A Barbershop Road Trip



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Singing Valentines with John Lloyd, Ken Glover, Don Bartels, and Harvey Weiss



Paul Paddock

Jim Richards Memorial Chord Candy # 144

"Here is one of the first tags I wrote back when I really first started experimenting with harmonies, after attending Harmony College for the first time over a decade ago. It came to me after a trip to the prairie and canyonlands in the west! Somehow a combination of that inspiration and having been acquainted with the "Lonesome Rose" tag merely spelled this one out. To further encourage the culmination, this is now "Like a lonesome rose on the <lone> prairie". If you get too lonely, don't worry: You can always grab some more friends and celebrate

with this tag! You'll see that it employs a good chunk of the circle of 5ths and the lead has the melody. Enjoy and see how many barbershop-7ths you can find in this tag mash-up!"

Rose on the Prairie

Paul Paddock

Like a lone - some rose // on the lone prai - rie

Andy Richards awarded Barbershopper of the Year—2022 at gala BOTY dinner

Once again, a great BOTY event was held at Mancinis on June 5, 2022. Guest quartet VOCALITY helped celebrate and fun was had



(L to R): Allison and Matt Richards, Andy and Karen Richards, Andrea and Jordon

Northern Pines Harmony Brigade a Huge Success in May



Georgia Grind

By Jim Erickson, Boots Baritone



Jim Erickson

I, of course, don't know about you, but I feel I have been slogging (you know how the foot-soldiers have done in the wars from forever on?) for the last several months through heavy mud. With political unrest, Covid, vaccines, quarantine, isolation, masks, maintaining a six-foot perimeter, running out of toilet paper, shortage of paper towels and—when I started this list, I thought there might be quite a few items. But as I began to write, it seemed never ending. OK, so I'll make my point. Narrowing this, I will relate it mostly to the Commodores.

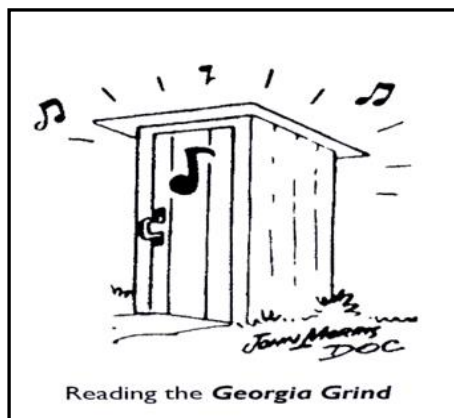
As singers and performers, we have had our share of the burden. But how has the chorus persevered in the face of it all? As we approached the recent concert, I sensed an apprehension on the part of our chorus leaders. Oh, I know there are always pre-concert jitters, but this seemed to reflect the last few years events and maladies. Will we be able to pull this rabbit out of the hat?

Jamye, and the rest of the directors and leaders, worked as best they could to generate confidence and enthusiasm as we headed to the concert hall. Honing each piece of music into a very presentable performance. But was there a touch of doubt about the actual concert. Had the daunting situations and difficulties had an impact.

Blake and his crew had done a nice job in putting together a theme and hanging some good songs on the pegs of the cities and

venues for a nicely entertaining show. As the chorus saw how the skit was going to play out, some excitement began to appear, but there was that ever-lingering pall. Not heavy or consuming but just barely noticeably there. Kind of like the season's first wood tick. You are not sure one is really crawling on you, but just thinking one could be makes it ever present. That feeling is always there, nagging. Of course, if you actually find a wood tick crawling on you, well, game over. You will feel those possible ticks for months.

So, the tech rehearsal a couple of days before the concert and the final run through of details just as we warmed up on concert day seemed to encourage the directing



and show staff. Of course, when you are standing in the chorus, it is difficult to tell whether we sound any better this concert, than we have at the many prior annual concerts. **Judy Olson**, in her usual top-of-the-game coaching, seemed to be unusually confident and encouraged by the efforts of the chorus. Jamye also reflected Judy's frank compliments about how the chorus was generating great harmony. As performers, we could not have been better primed to make this a memorable show.

Was that lingering unnerving still in our background? Beyond the usual jitters? Oh, of course it was. But after being masked-up,

cooped up, all the other "ups," all those were overcome by the joy of singing to a live audience once again. And live they were! Loudly clapping and joining the chorus on a few of the songs brought out the best in this audience.

But did being pent-up for so long result in a truly solid performance? One very musically adept person said he had never heard the chorus sound so good and this extended also to the quartets and VLQ's. In all respects, a concert to be proud of. A hit or miss survey by yours truly found everyone saying we had never sounded better and that we had done the best they could ever recall.

Remind yourself of all the hard work, coming up with solutions like Zoom rehearsals, singing masks, and on and on to work through all the last few years could throw at us. All of you who were involved in some way to make us what we are becoming should be very pleased with what we have accomplished.

Changing topics, **Paul Wigley** and I had a contest as to who could have the darkest tan by the time we returned from the sunny climes, he in Florida and I in Arizona. I actually did spend time at the pool bathing in the sunlight and feeling confident of my winning. I began to realize, though, that golfers spend hours each day in the sun. Less skilled players, even more. And I hadn't remembered when Paul headed south, but it was months before I did. There was even information slipped to me, that he had not only lathered on the baby oil each day, but also was using that bronzing tanning lotion. Can you imagine how desperate he must have been?

Grind (Cont'd)

An alleged independent chorister was grabbed as he strolled down the Bethel hallway and became our judge. I just didn't realize how much musical and tanning judges stick together, how baby oil and bronzing can add so much to a tan, how much of a handicap I should have demanded as Paul had a few month head start, how his growing up on a farm near Nicollet, Minnesota had permanently leather-tanned and tattooed his skin from an early age of baling hay, and so much more. No quarter was given from my gentlemanly requests for some considerations of fairness in taking all factors into account. But I graciously conceded. Just wait

until next year, though, now that I have some skin in the game, so to speak.

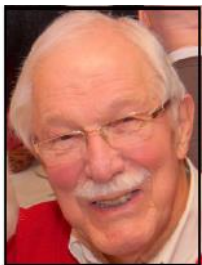
Now on to the summer performances. Remember to "hold fast to that which is good." And all who are still aware of the reason behind the **Georgia Grind**, I want you to know research on its origins has never been more intense.

Protect the truth, your voice and your health. Summer would be a great time to work on your Barbershopper bucket list, too, and see if you can begin to feel the excitement of the upcoming events.

Oh, one more thing. In all the years of being a Commodore, I

had never directed the closing rehearsal song. It is the tradition that a birthday boy for that month would do so. I finally got my chance. Not the usual procedure, but I dedicated my directing to honor the nice job Jamye had done with the annual concert. I decided to direct in her style including some of the unique ways she guides us with unusual hand motions, etc. Apparently she, and others in the chorus, immediately recognized this amazing style. So much so, that if a substitute for Jamye is ever needed on a last-minute basis, surely I can take her place.Can't I???

Musings from a Barbershop Curmudgeon



Bob Dykstra

One of the favorite activities of many Barbershoppers, including the old curmudgeon himself, is com-

monly called "woodshedding." There's considerable ambiguity among Society members as to what this term entails, however, so I did a bit of research on the subject.

Merriam Webster's Eleventh Edition (2014) of their Collegiate Dictionary defines "woodshedding" as "practice on a musical instrument." It also refers to earlier use of a woodshed as a practice facility. In other words, the practicing is to be done not for public consumption but to perfect and automatize

the musician's command of the music. The Oxford English Dictionary traces its definition of "woodshedding" to 1936 when the term was used by **Louis Armstrong** in a similar context for jazz musicians.

The term was associated in the early days of our Society with the manner in which songs were learned. The paucity of music arranged in Barbershop style, coupled with a Society membership which included relatively few sight-readers, resulted in most quartet numbers being learned by trial and error, by what **Val Hicks** in his wonderful book, *Heritage of Harmony*, called "extemporaneous harmonizing" or "ear-singing", or what came to be known to Barbershoppers as "woodshedding." I wonder whether early barbershoppers were familiar with the term because of its use in the jazz world and drew somewhat of a parallel between jazz musicians woodshedding (practicing) their instrumental

music and the Barbershopper's task of woodshedding (creating) Barbershop arrangements by ear?

Deac Martin in his 1948 ten-year history of the Society entitled *Keep America Singing* reported that one judging rule of the 1941 convention was broken so often it has hardly ever been mentioned in the annals of the Society. That rule stated that "each quartet must be prepared to furnish the national body with one of its arrangements, for the purpose of preservation." The rule was broken, of course, because many/most of the contestants had woodshedded their numbers so they had no printed arrangements.

Woodshedding gained a permanent place in the lexicon of Barbershoppers in 1977 when a group of enthusiasts formed the Ancient Harmonious Society of Woodshedders (AHSOW), whose purpose was and still is today "to preserve the skill of woodshedding as

Dykstra (Cont'd)

an art form within the Barbershop Harmony Society.” AHSOW defines woodshedding as “three Barbershop voices (tenor, bari, and bass) creating Barbershop harmonies by ear to a lead’s melody without any written arrangement.” AHSOW members clearly are devoted to preserving the art form used by our Society’s founders as a valuable way of creating Barbershop harmony. The code of ethics for AHSOW also shows a tie-in with the instrumentalists’ use of the term. Recall that the term’s early meaning related to practicing in a woodshed with no hint of sharing the practice with an audience. AHSOW’s code of conduct cautions members to practice their craft far afield of other ears for the same reason. Woodshedding is creating, not performing.

My 70 years of active membership in the Barbershop Harmony Society, however, leads me to believe that the term has a somewhat different meaning for most Barbershoppers. Based on my experience, I would argue that woodshedding to the rank and file Society member involves corralling three other guys with “good ears” who are fun to be around, finding a relatively quiet spot somewhere, running through a litany of Barbershop “chestnuts”, and enjoying the thrill of making simple but oh-so-gratifying Barbershop harmony. At least, that’s what woodshedding means to me. I’m not suggesting it’s an absolute either/or proposition, but woodshedding sessions for most of us involves more singing of old classics than woodshedding as defined by the Society’s AHSOW members.

Woodshedding as I’ve character-

ized it has been a big part of my Barbershop experience. In my early days of membership in SPEBSQSA, before the days of heavy emphasis on chorus singing at chapter meetings, various forms of pickup quartet singing dominated the evening’s activities. As more riser time became prevalent, we tended to arrive earlier and/or stay later so that we could enjoy more woodshedding time. I especially remember the days when the Minneapolis chapter met at the Elks Club in downtown Minneapolis. When the chapter meeting ended, the woodshedding crowd would head to a nearby establishment to have a beer or two, to grab a sandwich or a pizza, and to sing. At around closing time four or five of us would wander down to Cardozo’s Furniture Store, the entrance to which proved to be great for quartet harmonizing. We referred to it as Cardozo’s Shell and usually spent a couple of hours putting the shell to good use.

We eager woodshedders (according to my definition of the term) have also for the past 25 years or so been regulars at meetings of the Barbershop Quartet Preservation Association every Fall in Chicago and Spring in Mesa, Arizona. Each entire weekend is spent in woodshedding and pickup quartet contests. A newly-established organization, The Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in the United States, meets annually with a similar agenda. And, of course, 20-25 members of the **Friday Lunch Bunch That Meets on Thursday** have been meeting weekly in the Twin Cities for the past 55 years to woodshed and share news about what’s going on in their respective chapters.

As I wrap up my thoughts about this wonderful Barbershop activity. I’d like to share a couple of special experiences that have come my way because of my love for woodshedding. In the early 1990s, **Ron Thomley, Joel Kleschold, Don Sundt**, and I, all experienced quartet men, formed a woodshed quartet. We would meet periodically for a round of golf at a time and place that permitted an unhurried 18 holes of golf, where we could sing on every tee during the round, and then woodshed until dark while enjoying treats and libation brought by the designated provider. What made it special was that we would switch parts on every tee. If I sang lead on the first tee, for example, I would then sing bari, bass, and tenor on holes two, three, and four, respectively. Whoever’s turn it was to sing lead on any given hole was responsible for choosing the song. We continued this activity, adding **Jim Angell** and **Chuck Guthrie** along the way, until a year ago when old age came to bear on both our golf and our singing.

But perhaps my most memorable woodshedding experience took place at an international convention sometime in the 1960s. (I attended 52 such conventions so I can’t pinpoint exactly when or where this experience occurred.) One of my favorite Barbershoppers “from afar” was Austin **Combs** from Florida. We connected annually at the International Convention to catch up on things and to spend some time woodshedding.

Dykstra (Cont'd)

I recall he was very active in the Society's Sunshine District, that he did some arranging, and that he loved to woodshed. At the early 1960s convention in question, Austin and I hooked up with an acquaintance and a Barbershop icon to sing through some well-known "chestnuts." I sang lead, Austin sang bass, **Jerry Kissinger** was our tenor and **Phil Embury**, our bari. I knew Jerry because he sang with the Dunesmen Quartet from Gary, Indiana, a perennial semi-finalist International foursome as was my quartet at the time, the Hut Four.

As a result, our two quartets often shared time backstage during semi-final contests in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I had not previously met Phil Embury but was quite familiar with his contributions to our hobby. He was

SPEBSQSA's fifth international president (1944-45), a well-known contest judge, arranger of the Society's first printed Barbershop arrangement, "Sweet Roses of Morn" in 1941, and arranger for the Buffalo Bills.....just to name a few of his contributions.

I have no recollection about how the four of us happened to sing together that day other than that we were at the headquarters hotel and just hooked up. Austin Combs and I doubtless were joined in harmony and somehow began singing with Jerry and "Mr. Embury." (He was clearly my elder then and I must have been blown away to woodshed with such a Barbershop icon).

But there's more to the story. As the four of us were harmonizing a gentleman came by and introduced himself. He was an employee of network television giant NBC and

asked whether we would be willing to walk down the sidewalk singing so NBC could televise us for a segment on the evening news. They were doing some sort of feature on the convention. We quickly agreed and our singing stroll was video-recorded to be shown later that day on the network's Evening News. I never saw the television clip but my mother back in Wisconsin later told me she almost fell out of her chair when she saw me on her television screen that evening! I don't recall what we sang for the filming but I'm sure it was an old Barbershop chestnut. And I assume we were involved in a bit of both woodshedding and performing as we strolled and sang for the camera. But one thing I know. That minute or two of harmonizing more than a half century ago remains a vivid part of my memory!

Your Commodores Leadership is Working Hard for YOU!

(By President Harvey)

Our Chapter has a 14 member Board of Directors that meets monthly on Zoom; we have Co-Musical Director's, who have both barbershop and high school vocal experience totalling nearly 40 years. Our weekly newsletter **The SWIPE**, keeps members up to date on our weekly rehearsals agenda, plus any other news that needs to be communicated to the entire Chapter. Bi-Monthly, we produce our publication, the **CHORDINATOR**, which is full of news from Board members and

events and activities of the Chapter. Finally, a new initiative was brought forth this year called **3 Minutes to Excellence**. Simply put, the President interviews volunteer chorus members asking for their ideas about how to make the Commodores a better chorus. We have concluded our first quarterly report, and selective suggestions can now be considered by the Board.

Secondly, to enable faster and easier learning of new songs, PDFs

and vocal tracks are now combined into a single format, both by vocal part and complete mix. Words are now visible along with the music, together, simultaneously. Thanks to chorus member, **Doug Johnson**, who put in mega hours to put this technology together.

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Logo courtesy of Bob Clark

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To:

LOOKING AHEAD

July 19—Richfield Band Shell
 Aug 25—Hastings
 Aug 28—Twins Game
 Sep 13—Como
 Oct 14—LOL Convention, Bloomington

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minneapoliscommadores.org

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 Minneapolis Chapter of BHS
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