

March/April 2012

THE HARMONIZER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE HARMONY SOCIETY

Where would we be without this great

father
baseball player
war hero
dancer
singer
barbershopper?
director
photographer
quartetter
football player
husband

From the book

If Not For Jim Miller a life of excellence

INSIDE: Better performance choices • Old School: bridging generations • How to get the "performance glue" right

August 7–10, 2012

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4/26/12/12/104



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VOLUME
LXXII
NUMBER
2

You know them for their great singing and some very famous names. But Old School is about far more than honoring older songs and arrangements—it's about the “old school” values and experiences that tie us together when nobody is watching.



LORIN MAY

Features

10 If not for Jim Miller

Jim was excellent at almost everything he ever did. Learn what made the Hall-of-Famer and seven-time gold medal chorus director tick.

KENNY RAY HATTON

16 Make better performance choices

Without thoughtful consideration and thorough vetting, a careless choice can leave an audience in the cold. Get in synch with audience expectations.

BILL COLOSIMO, LORIN MAY

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Younger men with “old school” values making up their barbershop DNA, the 2011 champ is on a mission to bridge barbershop generations.

GEORGE GIPP

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Only four years old, the Spanish Association of Barbershop Singers convention attracted barbershoppers and friends from around the world.

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“Carolina Tag”

We have something you can't find elsewhere

When you start out on a great adventure, it is difficult to believe how slowly the build up to the trip is and how quickly time passes once you are there. How many of us spend two months preparing for our family vacation only to have it fly past in what seems like the blink of an eye? How many of you who are or have been chapter or district officers find that to be true? You take on a responsibility and spend a few months learning what will be expected of you only to find that it is over much too quickly.

That thought was going through my mind as I prepared to write this column for *The Harmonizer*. A two-year term as your Society president and it is 75% over! The election seems like only yesterday. There are so many things that we ponder in these instances. You certainly ask yourself what you have left behind that has made a difference,



It is hard to sing four-part harmony by yourself. We truly need others, and through singing with others I have developed some of the deepest and most amazing friendships of my life.

that has made something better, that has eased someone else's work or responsibility. Then the panic sets in—what *haven't* I done? I am sure we have all faced these same issues and concerns. Perhaps it is more important to start to question whether anything we have done in and for this organization has truly impacted someone in a positive way.

I started making a list of things that I have been able to do in the past 18 months as your president and in the previous four years on the Society Board, and then started thinking about people that were involved and whether their life was better for what we did. I was reminded that the real difference was the people themselves. I have belonged to many organizations in my life and my professional career. Not one of them was comprised

of the same type of person that we encounter in barbershop—caring, loving people who are bonded together by their passion and devotion to one very simple and common purpose: singing.

We all want to sing for ourselves and others. We all want to improve our singing and performing skills. We all want others to share this same purpose and goal. I would bet that not one person who reads this column would disagree with that statement. We do it at different skill levels. We do it at

different commitment levels. But we all do it.

And above all else, we do it with others. It is hard to sing four-part harmony by yourself.

Have you ever performed the baritone part as a solo? Not pretty. We truly need others, and through singing with others, I have developed some of the deepest and most amazing friendships of my life. What other organization could you belong to where you could stop in a strange town, call a barbershopper for help and find yourself welcomed into yet another segment of our great fraternity?

Where else would you receive such wide-spread personal support in time of difficulty—support without expectations and without payback? I have been blessed to be able to travel across these two great countries in our Society meeting new people, revisiting with old friends, but all the while cementing those new and old friendships into life-long relationships. And that has now extended to other countries where barbershoppers who share our passion, if not our language (well, they understand something, since they sing in English), are as open and welcoming as we are here.

Friends from Hawaii to Maine, from British Columbia to California, and from Texas to Newfoundland will be there when the memories of the last show or the last contest fade. So I encourage each of you to remember that it is these very friends that make barbershopping what it is.

We can argue over the results of a contest. We can disagree about whether a particular song is really performed in the barbershop style or not. We can argue over whether your chapter president is the right guy for the job. We can disagree about where we should stand on the risers or what part we should be singing or whether a particular song your chorus is learning is ready for public prime time. What we can always agree on is that your 30 friends in the chorus, the other three guys in your quartet, and the other 24,000 barbershoppers in our Society are among your very best friends.



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Did you enrich a life through singing today?

"Enrich lives through singing"

Does the above phrase mean anything to you? It does to me. It's important enough that it should come to mind whenever you are asked (or even ask yourself) what this Barbershop Harmony Society thing is all about. The phrase comes from the Society's mission statement, which says, "*The Barbershop Harmony Society brings men together in harmony and fellowship to enrich lives through singing.*" The more I reflect on that part of the mission statement, the more I see endless possibilities for the future of this organization and our ability as members to enrich lives and change many of them for the better.

I don't know how many more times I'll have this column before a new CEO is in place, so now is the time to share some thoughts on how barbershop has enriched my life. I also have a suggestion or two on what we members can do to pay it forward.

Quartetting

I've been a quartet singer for 20 of my 23 years in the Society—six with my dad, an experience that has enriched my life in a way only a few of us get to know first-hand. I hope to someday form a quartet with my own two boys. (Their cousins are all girls, so we'll never be like 2003 champ **Power Play!**)



Others lives can be enriched by a thrill we often take for granted.

I've belonged to four chapters, and all have had a strong emphasis on quartet-ting. Our **Nashville Chapter** spends a large part of the meeting night quartet-ting. In fact, each guest is invited to participate in a quartet during the break, and many are up for performing at the end! Our members love it, and they love the big smiles on a guest's face as he takes in the applause and thinks, "Wow! I just sang in a barbershop quartet. Not everyone can say that!" Their lives have all been enriched by a thrill we often take for granted.

Do you often have the opportunity to sing in a quartet? It doesn't have to be formal, but try it. Sing a song from the *Barberpole Cat* book. Sing a song from your chorus repertoire. Woodshed something. Sing a tag, teach a tag to a guest. (You may find that to be a great recruiting tool!) Enjoy ringing those chords!

Youth Outreach

Those of us who grew up in barbershop often joke about being raised by 25,000 uncles. That's not far from the truth. From the age of 10, each of the barbershoppers I saw each week was a role model who helped enrich my life. I'm not sure many of us older barbershoppers realize that the impact we have on young singers goes so much farther than the simple

tag or song we may teach them. Keep that in mind next time you sing with those youth at a chapter meeting, convention or youth outreach effort.

With summer comes one of the Society's greatest youth outreach efforts, the Harmony Explosion camps. Through generous gifts via Harmony Foundation, these multi-day events teach high school-age singers all about music and the thrill of barbershop harmony. Many of these events are tied in to a district Harmony College, and both events culminate with a fantastic concert featuring the Harmony Explosion Camp chorus, quartets, and other Society quartets. For more information about a Harmony Explosion camp near you, click the "Youth Zone" at www.barbershop.org. I promise you that seeing the excitement in their performances, teaching them a tag, or letting *them* teach *you* a tag will enrich your life in ways you never thought possible.

What if we went about our barbershop lives repeatedly asking ourselves these two questions:

- Was my life enriched through singing today?
- Did I enrich another's life through singing today?

As we turn our efforts outward to prospective members through programs like Operation Harold Hill, remember to share how you and your chapter enrich lives through this great hobby of barbershop harmony.

Please share with me how life has been enriched by barbershop harmony. Most important, tell your story to everyone you meet. Enthusiasm is contagious!

Rick Spencer

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The “Hunger Games” will soon strike Portland

The winner-take-all death match movie analogy may sound a bit strained, but not to the top quartets as they look at each other's qualifying scores. With a top-heavy field that includes nearly two dozen A-level quartets, close to 20 out of 52 quartets will show up in Portland with arguably finals-level qualifying scores. Last year's *medalist* score may not be enough to sing Saturday night! With many of the top qualifying scores nearly a statistical wash, perhaps eight or nine quartets appear to be within striking distance of gold—and that includes four quartets that didn't compete in Kansas City.

As of press time, 2011 silver medalist **Musical Island Boys** was still waiting to qualify, so 2010 medalist **Ringmasters**, who didn't make the trip from Sweden in 2011, have a great chance to arrive in Portland with the top qualifying score. Close behind is **Main Street**, much improved after winning a 2011 international medal only three months after forming.

The scores of two other 2011 medalists, **A Mighty Wind** and **Masterpiece**, are close behind, followed by two quartets that are new to the international contest. **Via Voice** features **Realtime** (2005 champ) brothers Mark and Tom Metzger, while **Throwback** features lead Sean Devine (2008 champ **OC**

Times) and brothers Alex and Dan Rubin (two-time finalists with **Rounders**).



Ringmasters



Main Street



Great Northern Union



Ambassadors of Harmony



Masterpiece



A Mighty Wind

finals after a few years off. Kansas City finalists **Forefront**, **Men in Black**, **TNS** and **The Allies** are also strong, but **The Crush**, **'Round Midnight** and **Da Capo** are also poised to break into this year's finals.

Although **Lunch Break** is taking the year off, expect **Main Street**, **Ignition!** and **Hot Air Buffoons** to pick up a lot of the comedic slack, while plenty of new quartets will be competing to be this year's Cinderella story.

Another amazing chorus contest promises to come down to the wire. The **Great Northern Union**, whose 2011 gold-medal-caliber performance narrowly missed earning actual gold, hopes to make its super-elite chorus status official by knocking off two-time international champion **Ambassadors of Harmony**.

The Ambassadors, meanwhile, want to earn a third gold with a performance they hope will be as memorable as 2009's then-record-setting “Seventy-Six Trombones.”

With too-close-to-call contests, other great shows, and the best tagging partners in the world all in one place, you're going to love Portland. See you there!

Order of Appearance

The Allies
Main Street
After Hours
Ringmasters
NZABS Quartet
Lemon Squeezy
Madison Park
Top Shelf
Voices Unlimited
Vocality
'Round Midnight
Ignition!
Alliance
17 Below
Da Capo
Chameleon
Momentum
Full Effect
Contingency Plan
BCQ
Bravo!
Grand Design
Absolut
Pinnacle
TNS
Artistic License
Forefront
95 North
Expedition
Throwback
The PURSUIT
Via Voice
The Crush
Masterpiece
Men In Black
Q-Tones
Quadraphonics
The Vigilantes
Anthem
Instant Classic
Crossfire
Ebb N' Flow
Up All Night
A Mighty Wind
Hot Air Buffoons
Mayhem
Wheelhouse
Glee Club Riot
REPLAY
EXCLAMATION!
Maverick
MAD Hatters

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at www.barber-shop.org/portland



Society briefs

The judges give up their secrets. Do you have burning questions about Contest and Judging? Get ready for answers straight from the judges! Kevin Keller, Chairman of the Contest and Judging Committee, has organized a panel of judges who will regularly answer member questions at *barbershopHQ.com* starting in the first part of June. Check back often!

“Look! Up in the clouds! It’s Lunch Break!” A tag for “Can You Read My Mind” from the *Superman* movie is the latest installment of “Tag Time,” demonstrated in their comedic style by K.J. McAleesejergins and the guys. Watch until the end! tinyurl.com/cwu23nx. All thanks to Audio/Video Manager Aaron Johnson!



Apply for Harmony University’s 2012 Honors Chorus. Under **Alexandria Harmonizers** director Joe Cerutti, the Honors Chorus will appear on Harmony U’s Saturday Night Show. Society mem-

bers registered for Harmony U may apply at tinyurl.com/79jx4o7.

Sing with The Champs in Portland. Thirty slots are available for you to enjoy the limelight with your icons on Saturday, July 7 from 8:30-11:30 a.m. For \$50, select from the listed repertoire of one of six past championship quartets. You’ll even get an HD video of the performance! Thanks to **Naked Voice Records**, 100% of the proceeds go to the AIC

Foundation for Youth Outreach efforts. Sign up at www.singwiththechamps.com.

Older-than-dirt barbershop recordings. The University of California-Santa Barbara initiated the Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project in 2002 to make old cylinder recordings available online. They now have an extensive library including a few of the old barbershop quartets such as the Edison, the Peerless and the Premier quartets from circa 1902-10. There are over 10,000 recordings in the collection. Find them at cylinders.library.ucsb.edu.

On March 15, Harmony Foundation Director of Development Sean Devine helped address a theater filled with Nashville business leaders in a presentation on vocal health and vocal surgery. Vanderbilt doctors Robert Ossoff and Thomas Cleveland asked Sean to speak extensively about his vocal rehabilitation, using it as the center point of their lunch hour presentation. Sean’s surgery and vocal therapy at the world-renowned Vanderbilt Voice Center saved his damaged singing voice shortly after he won the 2008 international championship as lead of OC Times.

A video clip of OC Times earned a huge ovation, as did Sean’s brief performance in an impromptu quartet with Society staff members Dusty Schleier (Br), Adam Scott (Bs) and Rick Spencer (T). Sean has also been prominently featured in the Voice Center’s promotions, while a framed photo (complete with an actual gold medal) is displayed prominently at the Voice Center. See his testimonial in the “Professional Musicians & Artists” promotion at tinyurl.com/seanvoice.



August 24, 2009

Sean with Dr. Robert Ossoff



PHOTOS BY LORIN MAY

Barbershop is back on XFINITY!

Comcast subscribers can now watch these favorite barbershop performances on XFINITY ON Demand. Watch any time, as much as you want! From the Comcast menu, go to *On Demand Music > Music picks > Barbershop Harmony*. The most recent offerings:

- **Max Q** - "Put Your Arms Around Me Honey"
- **Old School** - "Ma! She's Making Eyes at Me"
- **Gotcha!** - "Play That Barbershop Chord"
- **OC Times** - "Drivin' Me Crazy"
- **Vocal Majority** - "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho"
- **Lunch Break** - "Old MacDonald's Farm"
- **Masters of Harmony** - "Stranger in Paradise"
- **Prestige** - "Swanee"
- Tag Time 5 with Adam Scott

Watch to your heart's content until the end of June. Sign up for LiveWire at www.barbershop.org/livewire to have the new roster emailed to you.



Music Premiere 2012A: Get it!

Add this great mix of ballads and up-tempo tunes to your repertoire now! The **Music Premiere Series** is developed twice per year by the Society's Publication Subcommittee to give you the most singable and memorable arrangements available. You get the packet of six songs plus demo CD for only \$15 (includes shipping), with part-dominant learning tracks also for sale. To order, call 800-876-7464 and ask for package #205538.

- "Cinderella" (G. Cokeroff) #205532
- "Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?" #205533
- "Firefly" #205534
- "Jump, Shout and Boogie" (R. Payne) #205536
- "I'll Forget You" (L. Perry) #205537
- "I'm Gonna Live 'Til I Die" (G. Volk) #205535

Four-part learning CDs are available for separate purchase for \$12 each. Check out current and past series titles at www.barbershop.org/music-premiere-series.html. Purchase through Harmony Marketplace at www.harmonymarketplace.com or 800-876-7464.

Meet Becca Box, Membership Services Manager

If you are a barbershopper, Becca has your number. In fact, she has everyone's number. As Manager of Membership Services, ably assisted by Jacqueline Robinson and Michele Anderson, Becca is responsible for chartering and licensing of new chapters, quartet registry, new members, dues and fees, renewals, address corrections and Society Associates. An Associate herself, she already has one Man of Note.

Her daily routine requires her to interact both with individual members and also with chapter secretaries, chapter presidents and district officers. Thinking about forming a new chapter? Call Becca first. She will walk you through the process, ensuring that all the right materials are sent to you. Dropped out for a few years and wondering how you can make them up? Becca has the answer.

In 2008, she interviewed with Rick Spencer, then the Director of Music Education, for a Society job as Music Librarian, for which she was completely unqualified. However, Rick was impressed and later hired her as his assistant. Eleven months after taking that position, a staff reorganization moved Becca to her present position.

Self-described as artsy and creative, she is also quite an athlete, having run three half marathons. Born Rebecca Ellen Box, Becca is a lifelong Nashville resident, including four years just down the road at Middle Tennessee State University, where she earned a degree in mass communication with a photography emphasis. As the new headquarters building was being renovated, Becca took the weekly progress pictures that appeared in *The Harmonizer* and on barbershop.org.

While in high school, Becca was very involved in marching band, first as a clarinet player; in her two years as drum major, she led the



band to a national top 10 ranking. Music has been a life-long love for her. The church she has attended since childhood uses solfeggio (solfege) for its a cappella congregational singing. Becca's mom introduced her to Sweet Adelines International.

In 2004, the **TuneTown Show Chorus**, wanting a quartet in the Sweet Adelines Rising Star competition, formed a quartet with Becca and three other girls—all strangers at the time. Appropriately called **Last Minute**, after three weeks and with one rehearsal, they competed and took fifth place. The quartet has stayed together, continuing to compete each year. In 2007, they missed winning Rising

Star by only seven points and also moved up to second place in their region. The quartet does a few gigs, but their favorite thing to do is Youth Harmony Camps. Doing two or three every year, they try to teach the kids less about perfection and more about having fun.

While working as Rick's assistant, one of Becca's tasks was to oversee registrations and schedules at Harmony University. Singing tags (who would have guessed?) with the guys, bari Becca took notice of **'Round Midnight** (2011 international semifinalist) lead Wayne Grimmer teaching some "interesting" tags, and they became good friends. Almost two years ago, the relationship deepened. Wayne recently moved to Nashville to be closer to Becca.

When everything is going wrong, Becca says: "This, too, shall pass" About life: "If you can't laugh about what should embarrass you, what's the point?"

Becca Box, knowledgeable, helpful and professional. Your membership services manager. ■

— "Montana Jack" Fitzpatrick



CONVENTIONS 2012

PORTLAND, ORE.
July 1-8

2013
TORONTO
June 30-July 7

2014
LAS VEGAS
June 29-July 6

2015
PITTSBURGH
June 28-July 5

2016
NASHVILLE
July 3-10

2017
MINNEAPOLIS
July 2-9

2018
ORLANDO
July 1-8

2019
SALT LAKE CITY
June 30-July 7

MIDWINTER
www.barbershop.org/midwinter

ORLANDO
Jan. 8-13, 2013

LONG BEACH, CALIF.
Jan. 28-Feb. 1, 2014

NEW ORLEANS
Jan. 6-10, 2015

HARMONY UNIVERSITY 2012
St. Joseph, Mo.
July 29-Aug. 5, 2012



Win audiences with better “performance glue”

Many of us have seen a great singing quartet that, during a performance *set*, did not command an audience as one would expect, while an adequate singing quartet enjoys overwhelming audience approval. Almost all performance planning and rehearsal effort is applied to what we sing, while little attention is given to the *performance glue*—that which binds a performance set together and takes it from good to great.

Loosely defined, glue is everything other than singing: the performance plan, how you enter a stage, dialogue between songs, jokes, patter, novelties, etc. It is the rhythm and pace of a performance set. Here's a primer on putting it all together.



Group identity

A strong identity leads to great ideas for creating and executing performance sets. Explore group members' G-rated talents and traits:

- comedic ability
 - an unusual singing ability
 - the gift of gab (the group's best presenter should be the main spokesman, but you should use and develop others' abilities as part of the act)
 - physical attributes of individuals (either alone or in comparison to other members)
 - age of members or differences in age
 - juggling ability, yodeling, instrument playing
- (**Storm Front** uses this to great advantage; but remember you're a barbershop group, so use other elements judiciously)

Arc and plan

All good performance sets have a disciplined structure that determines the pace and rhythm in an overall arc. There needs to be careful planning of how songs are ordered, when dialogue is inserted, or items such as jokes, novelties and other “bits.” Extreme planning will include every move, every word, every gesture and every “bit” accounted for before, during and after songs. A looser arc might only consist of signposts—rehearsed targets (dialogue, songs, novelty bits, etc.) within an otherwise improvisational section. The signposts provide a home base for which the performer can aim while improvising.

When first starting out, it helps to plan as much detail as possible into your set. As you gain experi-

ence, confidence and identity, you can introduce some use of signposts to bracket small improv moments. This will develop confidence and skill in a performer.

Audience rapport

Creating a great rapport with the audience is job number one. It starts at the entrance and carries through the whole performance set. There are endless ways to do this, which will become clearer through good planning. As a starting point, here's a simple beginning strategy.

- Enter the stage and open yourself to appreciate the amazing people in the audience. Be aware of how friendly they are. Genuinely connect with them and then get on with the show. No lolly-gagging.
- Open the set directly with a song rather than

Sample set plan (roughly 20 minutes long)

1. **Enter Stage** – Greet the audience and thank them. Don't linger—get to business. Take the pitch as you are coming to center stage and go right into the first song.
2. **Song, upbeat opener** – “Wonderful Day,” “I Feel A Song Comin' On,” “Make Em Laugh” are a few examples of openers. Some openers, such as “Overture,” have lyrics that include an opening introduction.
3. **Song, light rhythm** – Going immediately into a second upbeat song helps to more firmly establish the pace. Inserting dialogue directly into this slot can be an effective alternative if upbeat, but this would change the subsequent slots.
3. **Dialogue** – This should be well-paced and can be cute, charming or perhaps topical to the local residents. It can be used to introduce the group or set up next song or give a story on the song that was just sung, etc.
4. **Novelty number** – “Element Song” and “Auctioneer” are examples. If the group has earned enough rapport points, the impact of a novelty bit will be that much greater. Some would consider placing a ballad in this slot. This will work only if rapport is strong enough—otherwise it can drag the set down. Determine how your group best impacts an audience.
5. **Dialogue** – This can be used to set up a song, stall for time to catch your breath, add pacing, etc. This slot can be used to set up the ballad to follow and set up the final number as well. You can tell the audience now that there are two more songs left in the act and thank them for being amazing.
6. **Song** – Ballad
7. **Song** – Upbeat with a great tag to finish
9. **Exit**

David McEachern
Harmony
U faculty,
experienced
quartetter,
presentation
coach
dbmceach@
gmail.com

dialogue or some other bit. Take the pitch after the bow and while coming to center stage.

- Stick with a song with an upbeat tempo that is light and charming and has a great tag. If the audience likes you from song one, you are off to the races.

Building rapport requires some finesse and elegance—a canned or by-the-numbers approach will not deliver. Entice, charm and humor the audience, which might want some “flowers” and perhaps a few “chocolates” before they will consider “going steady.” A strong investment in building positive rapport will give performers license to be more playful, dramatic, etc.

Rhythm and pace

Continuing to build rapport requires attention to the rhythm and pace of a performance set.

- Keep the set moving. Pedantic dialogue turns an enthusiastic audience into an oil painting in no time flat. Talking between every song becomes predictable (read: boring). Every song does not need naming or explaining. Singing two songs in a row is perfectly fine as long as it is not two ballads, and as long as they both support the rhythm and pace of the set.
- Introduce occasional novelty between or during the songs as a change of pace. Jokes, stories and other bits can propel and enhance a set if executed well.
- Telling jokes and stories is an art. It is all about ti(delivery)ming, so get coaching on this. Use jokes that fit both the spokesman’s/ quartet’s identity and the particular audience. Most important, make sure many people other than your mother think you are actually funny.

Review and evaluate.

Review each performance and evaluate the effectiveness of each of the prior listed glue elements. Your experience will quickly build and you can effectively add new elements to your performance packages. ■

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Jim Miller won six medals in 25 years as director of Louisville Thoroughbred Chorus, then won a seventh with the Southern Gateway Chorus, all without accepting a dime of salary. The famed lead with The Citations quartet and coach of gold medal quartets like Interstate Rivals (1987) didn't start his Hall of Fame barbershop career until age 33. By that point, the professional song and dance man, WWII hero, football All-American and minor league baseball player had already experienced more than enough drama and achievement to fill a lifetime.

The following pages are excerpts from the first four chapters of "If Not For Jim ... a life of excellence" by long-time friend and Bluegrass Student Union lead Kenny Ray Hatton. For more info on the book, see the ad on page 14.

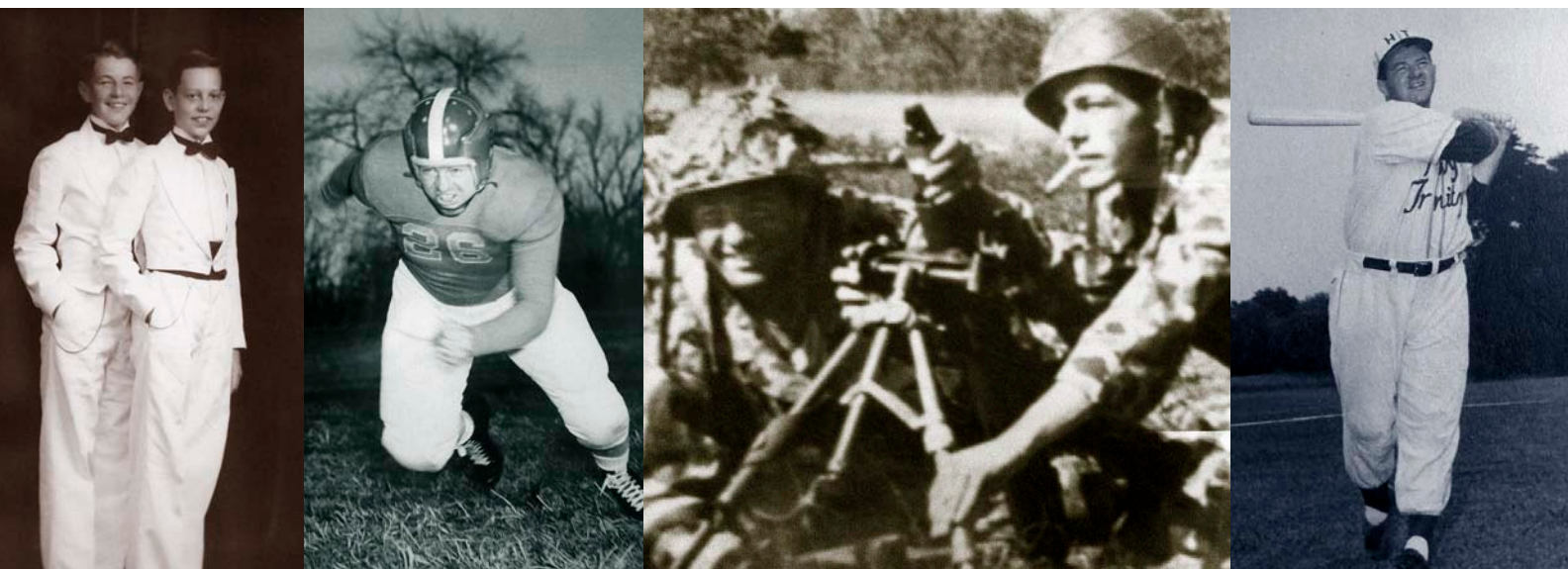
If Not For Jim a life of excellence

“Why in the bald-headed hell would anybody be interested in the story of my life?” It was February of 2001 when we had our first interview for this book, and I had to chuckle because, as was often the case, Jim Miller had answered his own question, even as it was asked. He would frequently use the vernacular for an effect, and it made you feel all warm inside; like you were being included with just a few select friends. His disarming vocabulary hinted of honor and romance, with a mix of humility and certainty, and there was always a touch of Vaudeville thrown in for good measure.

Jim Miller suffered and enjoyed a life worthy of examination. Unlike a lot of the stories about other “regular guys” of his generation, Jim’s will be read not because it has a “moral” (it does), but because every sentence has a “hook,” and because every paragraph has a punch line.

Jim was born in September of 1924, lived through the Great Depression as a child, and became a young adult in time to shake hands with a full-grown World War II. His question resounds with the common attitude of the folk of his generation: a willingness to sacrifice for a greater good. But that reluctance to place importance on self was

Jim (left) and his cousin Norm Carlisle were a song and dance duo throughout their teenage years—it was the only way Jim’s mother would allow him to play football. As a freshman guard for the University of Tennessee, Jim was a second-team All-American. His entire team volunteered for military service, and all received a temporary deferment that lasted until they could play in (and win!) the Sugar Bowl on New Years Day, 1943. In Germany, Jim (left, shown in mortar training) was captured twice by the Nazis—and suffered the rest of his life with complications from frostbite received during one of his two escapes. He later played college and minor league baseball, and walked away from the Cincinnati Reds farm team after a personality conflict with the manager.



never mistaken for a lack of confidence. Jim and his fellow citizens seemed to know that their efforts would affect other people well into the future.

Jim's formative life experiences culminated in a career as an exceptional barbershop quartet singer, chorus director and singing coach that enabled him to exert measurable impact on the lives of tens of thousands of people in a positive way.

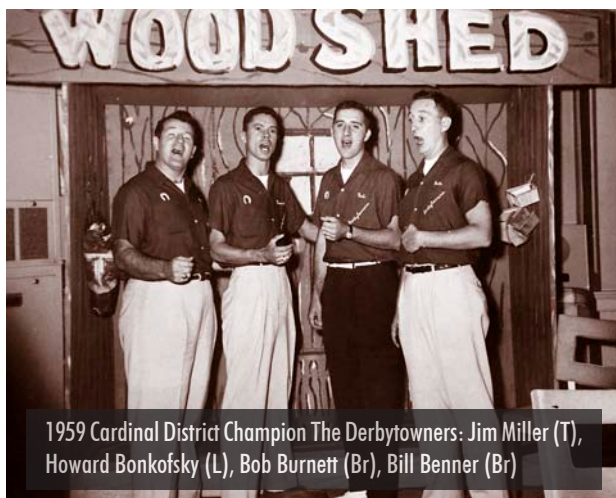
If not for Jim, there are some American soldiers whose existence would have been cut short, and most of the men who made up a certain Nazi patrol would have lived longer. If not for Jim, some great football players' lives would have been different, and thousands of barbershop harmony singers would have lacked the inspiration to excel (or even to participate).

Without Jim, many of us would not have developed a modicum of his qualities of perseverance, discipline and courage. We like-minded friends from around the world might not have focused our energies on a specific genre of music that has added vast emotional texture to our lives. I would not have chosen my religion, and some of my children might not have been born, including my son "James," whose name was given in honor of Jim. And that's why in the "bald-headed hell" I decided to write this book!

Excellence is defined as "better than," and Jim Miller excelled at virtually every endeavor he approached. He was better than most people at being a soldier, athlete, singer, photographer, dancer, musical conductor, and football coach, not to mention son, father, husband, friend and leader of men. In his later years, at a meeting where his replacement as music director of the Cincinnati **Southern Gateway Chorus** was being discussed, Jim began his parting remarks with, "I've been doing this longer than most of you, and better than all of you!" How true!

Jim felt that he never really accomplished anything through plan or design, but that "things just kind of happened" for him.

He relied on his religious and family upbringing to decide at every turn "the right thing to do," and then he went at it like a "bat out of hell." Jim's simple approach led to a high self-image, constantly fed by accolades from family, friends and associates. Jim



1959 Cardinal District Champion The Derbytowners: Jim Miller (T), Howard Bonkofsky (L), Bob Burnett (Br), Bill Benner (Br)

recognition of others, making sure to give credit in a public way for their effective efforts. That endeared him not only to the recipients of that recognition, but to any audience within earshot.

A pretty good noise

Whenever anyone presumed to stand before the **Louisville Thoroughbreds**, before he said his first word, somebody from the peanut gallery would suggest lightheartedly, "Tell us how you got started in barbershop!" It was an inside joke, as that subject was the predicted favorite of the ego of every speaker, and the story (yawn) was always the same. "I wish I had joined at a younger age." "My friend finally convinced me to attend a meeting, and everybody was so friendly!" "I heard that first overtone, and I was hooked."

As the speaker would recite each heartfelt sentence, not realizing it was a cliché, his audience of seasoned Thoroughbreds would roll their eyes and laugh out loud in recognition of

the lines they had heard from others so many times before. So it was the "mother" of inside jokes when I asked Jim Miller that same question, 46 years into his 54-year love affair with the Barbershop Harmony Society. After we finished our belly-laugh, he began his story in much the same way as every barbershopper a guy ever met. But as he continued, it became apparent that Jim's answer was going to be longer and more profound than any reply that I had witnessed of others.

"I joined the **Louisville #1, Kentucky Chapter** in 1957, at the age of 33. My dad had joined in 1948, but in '51, he was dead and gone. By the fall of 1959, our **Thoroughbred Chorus** had won our first Cardinal District

Miller was a happy man.

Jim recognized his strengths and his weaknesses, and surrounded himself with people who were trustworthy, loyal and competent, so as to plug any "holes" in his talent and personality. Along the way, he paid careful attention to the

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He never really accomplished anything through plan or design, but "things just kind of happened" for him. He relied on his religious and family upbringing to decide "the right thing to do," and then he went at it like a "bat out of hell."



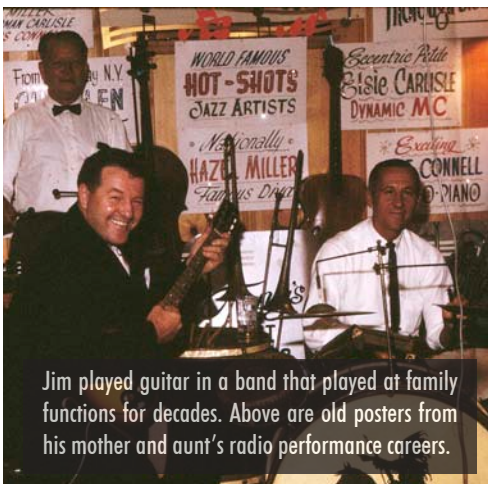
Kenny Ray Hatton
Lead, Blue-grass Student Union (1978 champ)
khatten@att.net

"I was an authority on everything, but I didn't know anything about this new thing that I was trying to do. In that environment, I was a big bunch of nothin', and I didn't like it one bit!"

Chorus Contest. My first quartet, **The Derbytowners**, won the district quartet contest that same year.

"I had joined in April of '57, and a month later we had a show featuring the 1949 International Champion **Mid-States Four** and the 1949 Illinois District Champion **Barber-Q-Four** ... I had heard chords ring before, but when I saw how those guys tore up an audience, I knew that was something I wanted to do."

It just so happened that the (1957 Fall District) contest was being held in Louisville, so there I was, singing in the **Louisville Barbershop Chorus** along with 60 other guys. I had played football and baseball in front of big crowds before, and I had sung and danced in clubs as a teenager, but that chorus effort left me in a shambles. I had no idea what in the hell happened to me while I was on stage. I didn't even remember being there!



Jim played guitar in a band that played at family functions for decades. Above are old posters from his mother and aunt's radio performance careers.

"I wasn't singing in a quartet yet; I was just singing in the chorus, but the weight of the world was on my shoulders. I'll never forget that feeling of insecurity that I had. The thing that went through my mind was, 'Maybe I haven't prepared the way I really ought to.' I felt really uncomfortable, and I made up my mind,

that I had to master this thing. My performance was like a 'minus 4.' I was terrible!

"That was a life-changing event in my barbershop career. With my seven Military Occupational Specialties, I had always been an authority in the Army. As a Second-Team All-American and as a high school coach, I was always an authority in football. As a minor league professional player, I had always been an authority in baseball. As a (teen-aged) professional song and dance man, I knew all there was to know about performing before I became a weapons expert in the Army. I was an authority in everything, but all of a sudden, I didn't know anything about this new thing that I was trying to do. In that environment, I was a big bunch of nothin', and I didn't like it one bit!"

Jim's experience taught him that the way to fight stage fright (the fancy new term is "performance anxiety") was to be better prepared with

practice and repetition, and to call forward one's strength of will in the same way that a soldier would face the enemy. He and Thoroughbred Chorus Coach Ed Gentry would often say, "In a contest, you will tend to revert to your lowest level of proficiency. The objective is to make your lowest level higher than

everybody else's level. You do that with preparation and mental toughness."

Musical savant

"Bill Benner, the chorus director, was our baritone, and was the driving force behind The Derbytowners quartet. He often over-sang the baritone part because he had a habit of trying to lead the quartet while we were singing. He didn't really do it on purpose, but Benner had a strong personality, and couldn't seem to trust the rest of us to remember what we were supposed to do.

"He was so self-centered that I always thought he had a screw loose, but he was probably some kind of a musical savant. Just like in the chorus, we never needed any written sheet music when he was around. Benner would just arrange songs in his head or memorize recordings of arrangements sung by famous quartets, and then teach 'em to us by rote. He would sing eight bars of your part, and you would repeat it, and then he would teach the same eight bars to the other two guys. We would then sing the same segment together, and we would just remember our parts. Rehearsals were a lot like having a few hours of fun tag-singing with three other guys who were real good at it. I guess the repetition and the joy of immediately hearing overtones and the way your part fit with the other three was what accelerated the learning.

"I had joined the Barbershop Harmony Society in the spring of 1957, while we were having big-time success with the football program at Flaget (High School). It was in the fall of '59, my last year of coaching, when we had the Derbytowners quartet going a year, and I went down to Evansville to sing in the quartet contest on Saturday afternoon, even though I had a football game back in Louisville that night. I sang in the contest, walked off the stage, walked out the door, jumped into my car, and drove



The Citations' 1972 USO Tour of Vietnam



Jim directs the Thoroughbreds Christmas Show Kids in 1965, including the author and his brother, Allen (lead and tenor of 1978 champs Bluegrass Student Union) in the middle and right of the back row. Middle photo: Jim directs the Southern Gateway Chorus, circa 1992. Right: Jim at the Thoroughbreds Reunion Show in 2008.

to the stadium in Louisville. I still had my tuxedo and my stage makeup on and all of that. I did wear a trench coat to cover up that powder-blue dinner jacket—I always wore a trench coat to the game, but I had forgotten about the makeup, which caused a little bit of a stir. I'll never forget the looks I was getting."

Time to dance

When the Thoroughbreds returned from the international convention Dallas in 1960, "things started to progress. Benner was pulling some shenanigans; running off people he didn't want, and that always [ticked] me off, but it was having a positive effect on the singing. ... There were a few things going on that I wouldn't be too proud of right now, but I was one of the new guys, and I didn't think it was my place to buck the leadership.

"Benner worked his tail off; no question about that. He would pick people's brains and then put that information to use. We damn near won the International Chorus Contest in Philadelphia in 1961, when (Director) Bob Johnson beat us [by nine points] with the 157-voice **Chorus of the Chesapeake**, and us with only 39 guys.

"The Thoroughbreds had kept the same two contest songs, so we were very well prepared in 1962. We finally won our first Championship handily in July, with 42 men on stage. ... We were pleased, but not satisfied. Yes, we were judged better than the rest, but we weren't yet as good as we could be, and that had been our goal."

"We had been studying the writings of Fred Waring where craft and diction were concerned, but they were somewhat unclear. Waring had three rules for good ensemble singing that we understood, but the fourth one was expressed with some ambiguous language, so we didn't really understand it at the time. Fortunately, there weren't any other barbershop choruses who understood it yet either, so we came out best.

"The first three rules had to do with concepts that were easy

to grasp; vowel matching, synchronization, volume relationships (balance) and classifications of word sounds. That's what all the smarter choruses were working on, and we just worked harder than they did. The result was an inspiring, manly sound, with vowels perfectly matched and with diction almost perfectly synchronized. Those chords would ring like crazy, and the hair on the back of your neck would stand up, and the audience would leak body fluids on their chairs. But on the negative side, it was a choppy, less refined sound when compared with pop or classical music."

That obtuse fourth rule had to do with maintaining "continuity of tone." It had been designed by Waring to explain the need to temper the application of the first three singing rules, in order to alleviate the choppiness and introduce a smoother (legato) sound with greater finesse, so as not to offend the sensibilities of the listener with contrast that was too stark.

Jim recalled, "The challenge reminded me of the difference between my hard-nosed style of play and the graceful way in which my pal, Tom Barry, used to approach the game of baseball. My dad always liked his way better, but I had never seen any advantage to it. Now, all-of-the-sudden, I could hear that our Thoroughbred style and those of our competitors were incomplete for the lack of that same kind of finesse. I was determined to learn more about that." ■

The e-book will be available for Nook owners at barne-sandnoble.com/nook and at amazon.com for Kindle, PCs and all other electronic devices.

"I sang in the quartet contest, jumped into my car, and drove to the football stadium. I did wear a trench coat to cover up that powder-blue dinner jacket, but I had forgotten about the makeup. I'll never forget the looks I was getting."



Jim was a high school offensive line coach for 13 years.

The Song is Ended...

Every barbershopper has a short list of mentors whose contributions can never be repaid. One guy wants it known that his enjoyment of the “hobby” is largely owed to two men—one a chorus director—the other a musical arranger. They were born in the same year—1924—and became barbershoppers long before joining the Society. Both have passed away leaving bodies of work that continue to inspire. The products displayed in this advertisement tell the stories of their impact on all of us from the perspective of that one guy—**Kenny Ray Hatton**, lead of the Bluegrass Student Union (see opposite page). These are his tributes to their memory.



If Not for Jim is Kenny's biography of his personal hero, **Jim Miller**, Society-Hall-of-Famer and seven-time International Champion Director of the *Louisville Thoroughbred* and *Southern Gateway* Choruses. The sixty chapters of the book describe Jim's pursuit of excellence at a dozen different endeavors before he ever “waved his arms” in front of an ensemble. The death of



Vaudeville, The Great Depression and World War II were just a few of the challenges that molded the steel character to create the greatest motivator of barbershop singers the world has ever known. We make no apologies for the fact that Jim's words, accompanied by photos from the Miller Collection, are presented complete with occasional salty language and punch-lines that served as the morals to his inspiring stories. **If Not for Jim** is available only as an “e-book,” which can be viewed on any electronic tablet, smart phone or computer screen. Jim Miller left us in October of 2011 at the age of eighty-seven.



Walter & Me, a collection of fifteen a cappella tracks (available as digital downloads), features Kenny's voice on all parts, as he presents “secret” barbershop arrangements written by pal **Walter Latzko**, another deserving Hall of Fame-inductee. The three-year studio project also incorporates collaborations by the two friends, as well as several charts written by Kenny alone. Some are pop-songs, like the Hoagy Carmichael-Johnny Mercer classic, *Skylark* and The Beach Boys' *God Only Knows*. You'll hear jazz-greats, such as *Girl Talk* and *Let Me off Uptown*, along with tasty contemporary tunes like Five for Fighting's mega-hits, *100 Years* and *Superman (It's Not Easy)*, not to mention Walter's final

work, *I've Found a New Baby*. Kenny's *Paint Your Wagon* Montage was written after the master's passing, but the great man's influence is unmistakable. Walter Latzko went to his rest in 2010 at the age of eighty-six.

...but the melody lingers on

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That's why they spent decades perfecting their art in the studio and on stage. With innovative engineer Bob Ernsperger at the helm, the quartet spared no expense in time or treasure to make sure their best efforts were captured for posterity.

LP records, 8-track tapes and cassettes eventually disappeared from the scene — and CDs will soon become relics as well. Who knows? Music could someday be distributed through a microchip-implant, but for now, the digital download is the



preferred method. Yes, formats change, but the ringing chord shines through. The style progresses, while good taste never dies. Fashion fades away, even as emotional substance continues to search for its noble purpose.

You may still purchase the Bluegrass Student Union's Complete Works 3-CD set **Legacy**, and its archival Digital Video-Disc set **Commencement** while supplies last. Neither will ever be reordered from suppliers. However, you can now purchase digital downloads of BSU's seventy-one audio tracks, one song at a time, or as albums entitled "Volumes I through VI."

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Make better performance **CHOICES**

Music & Performance chairman Bill Colosimo on how to get the audience reaction you'd intended



Barbershoppers have a well-earned reputation for presenting quality, wholesome entertainment, and we didn't get that reputation by being insensitive or careless. But even experienced, well-intentioned barbershoppers can make choices that leave some audience members feeling sour. The following is a distillation of an interview with Society Music & Performance Chairman Bill Colosimo. Here, he discusses how to avoid objectionable content and ensure that performance choices have the intended effect on audiences.

We have a lot of contest rules but almost nothing for non-contest performances. Do we need rules?

There is no pressing need to legislate how we behave on non-contest stages; however, we have solid principles against which to measure our choices. In every moment before an audience, ensemble members should be seeking to serve these priorities:

1. their own integrity, or being true to what they are
2. the audience's enjoyment
3. the greater society, or the climate at large

If you are not honoring all three priorities, it's time to reevaluate your performance choices.

The responsibility to make these choices falls upon the music leadership of the chapter or the members of the quartet as a whole. The problems come when performance choices have not been thoughtfully considered and thoroughly vetted.

In what areas are Society groups most likely to make a questionable choice?

Most common are the non-singing performance elements, especially humor. If it occurs to you that a joke has a one out of 1,000 chance of offending someone, don't use it. If you have a slight inkling a lyric may

be misheard or a phrase might have a double meaning, don't use it. This is especially true with young groups: Be mindful of the fact that not everyone is as hip as you are. The bottom line is, when in doubt, don't. If you even have to think about it, don't.

So as long as the humor is G-rated, go for it?

Not if it isn't funny. If you're not naturally funny, don't try to be. What is more endearing to audiences is to just be who you are; let us get to know you a little bit. The audience didn't come to hear bad humor or insincere delivery. And if you really are funny, remember that they didn't come to hear more dialogue than singing.

Can something be clean and relatively funny but still be inappropriate for general audiences?

There are so many ways we can be either overtly or inadvertently offensive. I've seen chapters have guys come out in monk costumes before intermission and do a chant about having to take a bathroom break. You don't have to be Catholic to roll your eyes at that. Also, anything that hints at treating women like objects for men's enjoyment, that has to go. Remember, some laughter is actually nervous laughter. These are times where I feel so uncomfortable for the performers and for

audiences. You might have to fail a few times to get your mind adjusted to what works. Again, if you even have to think about it, then don't.

How can we learn ahead of time whether something will go over well?

Experienced barbershoppers within every district would be honored to share their wisdom and feedback. You only have to ask. Solicit opinions from a district Music & Performance person or another

Bill Colosimo is a 35-year Society member and chairman of the Society Music & Performance committee. He is director of the **Singing Capital Chorus** in Washington, D.C., a member of the **Alexandria Harmonizers** chorus (2011 international medalist), director of **The Alexandria Singers** mixed chorus, and baritone of **Last Kids Picked** quartet. His proudest barbershop accomplishment is "Anthony's Dad" as in Anthony Colosimo, the lead of **Da Capo** quartet and associate director of the Alexandria Harmonizers.

Lorin May
Editor, The
Harmonizer
harmonizer@
barbershop.org

"The bottom line is, when in doubt, don't. If you even have to think about it, don't."

experienced member. Consistently invite a Standing Ovation Program reviewer to your shows. If nothing else, any of them can help make your package better. We're never going to be able to please everybody, but we have a better shot at it if we ask for help.

A couple of years back, Crossroads (2009 champion) took some heat in online forums after they ended their swan song set with a Christian hymn of worship. Some viewed it as proselytizing. Can you comment on that?

As far as the three priorities go, was this performance true to who they are? Absolutely—there was nothing more true to those four men. As for audience enjoyment, some members of the audience were twitching in their seats a little bit. It was momentary, and we cannot please everyone at every time; but was the audience put in a situation for so long that it was unbearable? It really is in the mind of the beholder. It's okay if people have a problem with an overall performance. When the question is about one song out of many, there may have been a reason a particular song was chosen.

As to the effect it had on the outside community, people will say what people will say. We have no control over that. But we do have a responsibility to consider what they *might* say. Much of this particular debate took place among people who didn't see the performance in context, and the discussion often ranged far beyond the scope of Crossroads' package. A more precise question is, were the performer's intentions and the audience's expectations in synch? That's the valid discussion.

Have you seen performances that definitely crossed the line?

Without getting into details, a gospel group headlined a prominent barbershop show a few years ago. Now, I'm Christian and I was expecting gospel music, but their program went far beyond my expectation level. I felt violated, misled as an audience member. I would have had no problem with two or three songs of worship spread throughout, but after four or five in a row, I got up and left. Show me the beauty, but don't cram it down my throat. I'm not there to be proselytized; I'm there for the art form that I love.

Even if I otherwise agree with a message, I squirm in my seat if the performers seem to be imposing their will upon the audience. That's the key question: Is the group imposing itself upon a captive audience? Again, it really is in the mind of the beholder. But as performers, we have to be very sensitive to audience expectations.

In the Society Code of Ethics, #8 states: "We shall not permit the introduction of political, religious or other similar controversial issues into the affairs of the Society." Does this apply? It's clear to me that when they developed the Code of

Ethics, our founders were not trying to limit artistic intention—it was about fraternal intentions. It's not about whether I get paid for coaching or whether we sing a religious song. It's about whether

you show up every week and some guy is trying to sell you insurance, or get you to join his church, or use the chapter to push his political views. It's there for our own sanity.

On the other hand, if there are disagreements or questions about repertoire choices, ethics five and six do provide some excellent guidance: "We shall exhibit a spirit of good fellowship toward all members" and "We shall refrain from forcing our songs upon unsympathetic ears."

You mentioned political views. Are there any ethical considerations about singing at, say, a political fund-raiser?

My quartet sang at a fund-raising gig for a congressman, and none of us voted for him. If you are hired entertainment, performing a non-controversial repertoire for an audience that has a right to ask for your services, you are no more endorsing a platform than the caterer that's serving the food. If you were not paid, you're no longer considered hired help—you're contributing your services to help promote them. The question is, is your group supporting a particular cause in an overt way? That can be a problem.

National Public Radio once broadcast musical clips from a chapter's rehearsal, named the chapter and the Society, and then interviewed members about their specific political views. The member who e-mailed the audio link thought this was inappropriate. Do you?

It's rare to hear anything political in most chapter meetings, and this is a third party inciting disharmony by asking provocative questions. The men were unwise to answer political questions in a barbershop setting, but my real beef is with the fact that the questions were asked in the first place.

What should someone do if he has concerns over some part of the chapter's repertoire?

I direct the **Singing Capital Chorus** in Washington, D.C. Several years ago, I was approached by two members who asked to remove a song from our repertoire: "God Bless the U.S.A." One is a professed atheist, but he had no problem singing "God Bless America." Instead, it was because "God Bless the U.S.A." was George W. Bush's theme song—it got played at all his



Check out past Society Music & Performance chairman Charlie Metzger's take on a sensible approach to song choices in the July/August 2003 issue of The Harmonizer. Download it at www.barbershop.org/harmonizer.

Adjusting questionable lyrics: "sensitivity" and "political correctness" are not the same thing

When we talk about "offensive language," we may really be talking about two qualitatively different things:

- **Superficially offensive language:** Words that offend someone's sensibilities (cuss words or dirty jokes, for example)

- **Morally offensive language:** Words that directly belittle, demean, or humiliate an individual or group

Barbershoppers are mostly unambiguous about superficially offensive language in a performance: we avoid it. As for morally offensive language, there is rarely disagreement on the extreme end: hateful, unambiguously racist, sexist, or homophobic statements intended as an overt verbal assault. The discussion of questionable lyrics instead takes place toward the lower end of this category: words that are easily recognized as demeaning to certain people or groups, or phrases that seem to make light of or trivialize things that are morally egregious such as slavery, sexual abuse, oppression, and so on.

Few barbershoppers have a problem editing out superficially offensive language. But when someone suggests editing out morally offensive language, some have the unfortunate tendency to dismiss those concerns as mere political correctness, while saying, "Just blow the pitch and sing."

In arguments about political correctness, the two sides almost always talk past one another because they're each using the term to refer to completely different things. Let us make a distinction:

- **Sensitivity:** Common moral concern for how our words and actions affect other people.
- **Political correctness:** An exaggeration of what may otherwise be reasonable concerns over how we use language. Suggests that if you use certain words or phrases then you are revealing your own latent prejudices. It doesn't matter whether you intended to offend.

Ask yourself: if a good friend came to you after a show and told you that one of your songs was deeply insulting and demoralizing to him, would you respond with, "Get over it. Don't be so sensitive"? Concern for morally offensive lyrics is not about political correctness, nor is it a question of whether the lyric might hypothetically, superficially offend some individual or group. It's about taking the effort to step outside our narrow, confined perspectives on the world and trying to understand how the things we do and say affect other people.

Questions like "Is this lyric politically correct?" or "Might this be offensive to someone?" are too vague to be effective. Give it serious thought and be more precise: "This lyric is insulting," or "That lyric is demoralizing." Are the words disrespectful, degrading, belittling, devaluing, demeaning, humiliating, abusive, debasing, vilifying, slanderous, defamatory, stigmatizing, marginalizing, exclusionary or denigrating? All those terms capture subtle distinctions.

Talk to someone who might be affected by it. Identify exactly what is wrong. Make a decision. Adjust a lyric if it needs adjusting. *Then*, let's blow the pitch and sing.

— Dan Delaney, Kentucky Vocal Union

events. They were strongly opposed to the president's agenda, and it really bothered these two to perform a song that they and many others associated with a polarizing figure.

Now, I don't think so many people in the audience would have felt the way these men did about the song. I had a choice there. I could have said, "Get over yourselves," but I needed to make a sensible decision for the good of the whole, the 30-35 singers. In the end, I put my personal preference aside for the good of the group.

Are you saying if one or two members don't like a song for some reason, nobody gets to sing it?

No, but this issue could have divided the chapter along political lines. If they had just told me they didn't like the song or a certain passage, I probably would have kept it. For our ensemble to remain true to itself, there had to be unity within. If our ensemble members are truly uncomfortable with a song, it's not worth doing.

In what circumstances could majority opinion matter more?

One example: in some rural communities, a Society

chapter acts as the summer replacement choir at various churches. For the members, it fits into the ensemble's sense of being true to itself. If a man joins that group and is uncomfortable with being part of worship services, in my view and my experience, it's okay for a chapter to say, "This is something we do. You can choose not to participate, but we will not stop doing it solely for your objection."

Is this chapter representing the Society in general? There are many different types of chapters—a fact we should celebrate—and they are independent entities that can make various choices for good or ill. Applying this to the previous question: while a chapter may need to accommodate an individual's heartfelt concerns, an individual member cannot dictate what the chapter will do.

You talked about the independence of our chapters. Are there practical limits?

One chapter had three shows over one weekend, and their flyers clearly stated that if you don't want to be offended, don't go to the Saturday night show. Now, this chapter hasn't locally touted its affiliation with the Society, even if they've created a repertoire true to the

art form. There may have been bawdy songs, off-color stories—I really don't know what went on. What concerned me was that this was a Society chapter advertising a non family-friendly show. I later told them, "You're not as independent as you let on. To use your membership in the Society when it suits you and then to go against Society-wide standards at home, that was an unwise choice. If there really is this groundswell to do content you know is objectionable, don't do it under your Society chapter or chorus name."

Could barbershop's G-rated reputation make us seem out of touch in a culture where courser material is becoming more mainstream?

By our charter, the Society is representing family-friendly, high-value entertainment. Other groups thrive on being edgy—that's part of their DNA. That's not part of our DNA. There's enough cultural decay everywhere right now, we don't need to contribute to it. We're all about a quality, beautiful, unique art form and the joy of singing it together. If we keep doing what we're doing, that rises to the top.

How do all these principles impact recruiting?

A primary recruiting problem for many chapters is the lack of quality performances outside of our rehearsal halls—a chance for people to see us and think, “I really want to do that.” For good or bad, men make membership choices based on what they see (or never see). If you make an insensitive choice—put any doubt in their minds about this being an organization that will appeal to them—you’ve turned those potential members away. On the other hand, if you do perform publicly but sing a song poorly because it is beyond your abilities, that will also turn away potential members.

Are there any other questionable choices you’d like to discuss?

Performance attire. It needs to show appropriate respect for the audience. If you’re wearing polo shirts and khakis, it had better be a picnic performance. Put more thought into your attire. Visually show audi-

“Is the group imposing itself upon a captive audience? It really is in the mind of the beholder. But as performers, we have to be very sensitive to audience expectations.”

ences that we care about what we do. As with all performance choices, audiences need to feel honored and respected.

Any parting thoughts?

We don’t need to be prudes, or stodgy or so hypersensitive that something might offend one out of 10,000 peo-

ple. Assume the audience isn’t looking to be offended. All we try to do is be sensible. If you don’t know what to do, call people. You’ll also get better internal feedback if you maintain a chapter culture in which you don’t enforce your own internal brand of “political correctness.” Encourage healthy dialogue. No one should feel afraid to bring something up because he’ll be thought a prude or oversensitive.

Sensitivity means respect for a broad range of viewpoints; it’s also about preservation. Don’t cast a bad light on what we do. Don’t create obstacles so that people want to say “no.” And, one last time, if you have to think about it, don’t do it! ■



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There couldn't have been a more appropriate setting for the very first post-championship performance by this quartet with the stated mission to "bridge barbershop generations." The newly-crowned 2011 champs performed for a room filled with past quartet champions in the historic lobby of the Muehlbach Hotel, where OC Cash and Rupert Hall met in 1938 and planned what turned out to be the first Society chapter meeting.

PHOTO BY LORIN MAY

Behind the Old School mission

The old school of barbershop is about everlasting values. Younger in body but older at heart, the 2011 champs hope to bridge the old and new generations

It was Sunday at 11:58 a.m. in a meeting room at the Hyatt Place Hotel in South Bend, Ind., just seven hours after **Old School** wrapped up a Saturday night chapter show's *after* afterglow. Digital recorders were cued up next to a case of bottled water, a supply that would shrink during the precious three hours before the men headed home to four different states. The quartet was in exceptional voice considering the previous day's packed rehearsal and performance schedule. With about four weeks before the 2009 International Contest in Anaheim, this was a critical rehearsal. Actually, *every* rehearsal is precious for any of the Society's geographically-dispersed quartets.

Jack blows a *B*. Kipp buckles up as Joe Connelly sings "Readeeeeey ..." and "Beast" (Connelly's affectionate nickname for bass Joe Krones) begins with "DiggaDiggaDiggaDig ..." The quartet chimes in with one of Lou Perry's finest, a song made famous by 1980 champ **Boston Common**: "Bring Back Those Good Old Days."

That's the way every rehearsal begins for Old School. Always has. Always will.

Not only does the song provide the full range of vowel sounds and the glorious circle of 5ths, it sets the tone for the message and the mission of the group. *Bring back the good old days*. That's just what they do!

For this quartet, "old school" barbershopping is about far more than ringing a big tag, or singing the classic songs, or maximizing the number of barbershop 7th chords in an arrangement. If you want a taste of what the Old School mission is all about, the song that they sang in the beginning of the rehearsal is less important than the call they made at the end.

"The call"

Their precious rehearsal time was in good hands. Lead "Awesome Joe" Connelly, as always, was very prepared and ran a very tight ship. Some interpretive and balance tweaks to lock in, contest sets to be run and run and run again. Some costume discussion and final presentation decisions. This was standard operating procedure; however, two elements made this rehearsal extra special.

First off, this was the rehearsal where they made important changes to "As Time Goes By." This Walter Latzko masterpiece was first sung by the great 1950 champ **Buffalo Bills**, immortalized by the 1961 champ **Sun-tones**, and was further refined by 1978 champ **Bluegrass Student Union**. To modify a signature arrangement for three of the most important quartets of all time could be viewed by many as sacrilege. ("Why not modify DaVinci's

Mona Lisa while you're at it?") However, the baritone suspension chords had to be eliminated to comply with modern-day Music category rules. Whatever changes they made had to preserve the integrity of the chart, and they'd need to be perfected by contest. It was now or never.

The second extra-special reason was so important that they cut their precious rehearsal time a half hour short—they needed to allow plenty of time for “the call.” On the other end would be the lead of multi-medalist legend **Four Rascals**, Tommy Spirito, who had just lost his beloved Pat, his wife of 57 years. They dialed up, placed Tommy on a speaker phone, and Joe Connelly opened up what would be very difficult yet therapeutic dialog. Each man took his turn letting one of their idols know that he was in their thoughts and prayers. The most appropriate way for a barbershopper to express feelings of love, concern or even grief is through song. Amidst the range of emotions and the shedding of tears, the session came to a reverent close as Tommy listened to the quartet sing Freddie King's arrangement of “Tomorrow is Promised To No One.”

The mission: Bridging barbershop generations

Old School is not unique in its instinct to drop everything to share the power of song with a brother at a pivotal time. As barbershoppers, that's just the kind of thing we do. Yet, as we take a closer look at the Old School quartet members, you'll recognize that for all their competitive accomplishments, they are first and foremost barbershoppers to the core. The concept that “it is better to give than to receive” is infused into their very DNA.



Their dads' own quartets inspired Kipp and Joe's 1987 gold with Interstate Rivals



Old School is now compelled to share with the rising generation of barbershoppers

The quartet's name and mission are to honor our Society's heritage, the “old school” of barbershop—old school singing and old school values. It's about men who make the world a better place through song—individuals who give of themselves and go the extra mile with a song in their hearts.

The songs and values of past barbershop generations lie deep within each member of Old School. Still relatively young (they were all in their 40s in Kansas City) they are nevertheless senior

members of the Society who have inherited old school barbershop values and traditions. They proudly wear the “Old School” banner in hopes to act as a bridge between the older and newer generations of barbershoppers.

To carry this message of music and fellowship, the members of Old School pay respect to the legends that have gone before us. (See sidebar on page 24) They are equally committed to sharing with those who follow. This is not only a noble undertaking, they believe, but an example of the broader sharing that is essential to the future of the hobby we so dearly cherish.

In fact, that's how each member of the quartet learned “how to barbershop.” It was passed down belly to belly by some of the greatest human beings ever to serve our Society. The quartet members remain committed to making themselves as accessible and available in serving fellow barbershoppers as their legendary mentors were to them. That leaves some pretty big shoes to fill. Consider the giants that helped mold the members of Old School.

Young guys growing up in the old school

Both tenor Kipp Buckner and Joe Connelly were blessed to have been born into cradles of barbershop greatness. They were able to learn the art form and craft literally while much of it was being created.

Kipp is the son of Ken Buckner, one of the musical and administrative pillars of the legendary **Louisville Thoroughbreds** dynasty and bari of the international finalist **Citations**. The quartet would rehearse in the Buckner basement, and from the time Kipp was a little boy, he would go downstairs and sit in the middle of the group as they stood facing each other in a circle. As he got older, he would see them sing quite often as all four—including their incomparable lead, Jim Miller—were directors of the seven-time gold medal chorus. No surprise here, Kipp joined the chorus when he was 14.

“Awesome Joe” is the son of Mike Connelly, bari of the legendary multi-medalist **Roaring '20s** quartet



Kipp Buckner (T) started singing at age 14 with what was (at that time) Louisville's five-time international chorus champion **Thoroughbreds**. Over the next 10 years, he won two gold medals with them while being directed by Jim Miller and the other three members of the **Citations** quartet, including his father, Ken. Inspired by the other “chapter quartet,” **Bluegrass Student Union** (1978 International champ), Kipp's first quartet, **Interstate Rivals** (with Joe Connelly at lead), became the 1987 international champion. Kipp won gold again in 1993 with **The Gas House Gang**, one of only four quartets in the Society Hall of Fame. He has also won chorus medals with the **Southern Gateway Chorus** and **Ambassadors of Harmony**, including gold in 2004. He lives in Louisville, Ken. with his wife, Kim, their daughter Kennedy, and with Kila and Keegan from his previous marriage.



A young Kipp subs at tenor with The Citations, singing next to lead Jim Miller, director of The Thoroughbreds



George Gipp
Coach, mentor and life-long friend
gggipp@comcast.net



Joe Connelly (L) is a 35-year member of the Barbershop Harmony Society. He is a certified Presentation judge, one of four musical directors for the **Southern Gateway Chorus** and vocal performance coach of men's and women's quartets and choruses around the globe. He is the Society's only four-time international quartet champion, having previously won as lead with **Interstate Rivals** (1987), **Keepsake** (1992) and **PLATINUM** (2000). Joe followed in the footsteps of his father, Mike, a 50-year Society member and seven-time international medalist with the **Roaring '20s** and **The Naturals**. His wife, Gayle, sings lead with Sweet Adelines 12th-place semifinalist quartet **Lucky Day**. They reside just outside Washington D.C. in Falls Church, Va.



An unrivaled international quartet medal collection

lead of the 1965 champ **Four Renegades**, Joe Sullivan. "Sully," along with Sweet Adelines champion bari Helen Peters of **Junior Misses**, mentored Joe through his formative years in quartetting and chorus directing. Young Krones then set his sights on being a worthy bass singer and chose his Illinois mentors wisely: two-time gold medalist Tom Felgen (Renegades & 1981 champ **Chicago News**) and Don Bagley of the 1988 champ **Chiefs of Staff**.

Jack Pinto credits Dr. Greg Lyne as having had the most profound positive influence on his musical development. But considering Jack grew up in New Jersey and now directs two Garden State chapters (**Hamilton Square** and **Princeton**) by definition, that places him in the lineage of the mighty Mid-Atlantic District. In fact, his grandfather Frank Pinto was a charter member of Princeton. It is no wonder his heroes include 1970 International champ **Oriole Four** and 1974 champ **The Regents**. He was especially drawn to the multi-medalist and style innovators, **Easternaires**. Certain individuals from these groups always made themselves available to help young Jack. Easternaires Tenor Eddie Ryan, to this day, calls to chat. Ron Knickerbocker, bari of The Regents, took Jack under his wing and today proudly serves as Old School's singing coach. Inspirational musical giant Fred King, Oriole Four baritone and champion director of the

(and multi-medalist **The Naturals** later on). The '20s served as the musical mentors and role models for the international champion **Southern Gateway Chorus**. All were innovators of the entertainment driven/quality singing combination. Joe, like Kipp, would faithfully attend his father's rehearsals early on and travel to shows with the quartet as a young teenager. How fitting that today, Joe is the musical director for Southern Gateway—the chapter his father so loves.

Joe Krones, who now lives in the Dallas Metro area and sings with the **Vocal Majority**, grew up in the central region of Illinois, about three hours from the barbershop "hot bed" of Chicago. Fortunately, his **Peoria Chapter** was a surrogate home to the multi-medalist original

Chorus of the Chesapeake, was always there to teach. How fitting that in 1993, when Freddie temporarily lost his vision due to diabetes, it was Jack who Fred asked to finish the manuscript on his Nat King Cole Medley. "The King" dictated, Jack wrote. As barbershoppers, that's the sort of thing we do.

Why is this all so important? Because out of love and kindness, men such as these invested their time, talent and treasure to help the members of Old School become the men they are today. They are now honored and compelled to reciprocate.

On the road again: The show must go on

Even on the barbershop show circuit, Murphy's Law remains fully intact; if something can go wrong, it probably will. Yet it is in these moments of chaos and disarray when the true character and humanity of a barbershopper comes shining through.

Over the last six years, Old School's experience is very similar to so many other quartets and chapters throughout the world. The names and faces change, but the stories are surprisingly similar. Do any of these ring a bell?

The Lost Baggage: Stone Mountain

The greatest fear and nightmare of a chapter show chairman is to have uncorrectable challenges impact the headliner quartet. While audiences attend chapter shows mostly because of their connection to chorus members, the out-of-town quartet does serve as the cherry on top of the sundae. Such was the case as the **Stone Mountain, Ga. Chapter** had booked the reigning gold medalist Old School for a three-show weekend: Friday night and two Saturday. Here comes Murphy...

The weather was terrible and the Philadelphia fight was *very* late. Some of the luggage did not arrive. The quartet jammed into their rented car and raced 40+ miles through Atlanta traffic to Stone Mountain with Awesome Joe at the wheel—a potential disaster by itself. It was not good enough. By the time they arrived, the show was over and "Keep the Whole World Singing" had already been sung. Imagine the disappointment shared by the audience and chorus members alike. Now think of the excitement and joy when it was announced to the departing audience that the quartet had safely arrived and yes, Old School would perform. No time to warm up or dress in costumes... they sang in their street clothes! That's what we barbershoppers do.



This is no mic test—it's an unforgettable chapter show gig for which "last minute" is actually an understatement

Eight minutes and counting: a scare at the BABS convention, 2009

Kipp was in the hotel room at Llandudno, the biggest seaside resort in Wales, experiencing severe sharp chest pains with a heavy feeling and shortness of breath. These were the symptoms of a heart attack. The ambulance techs didn't want to take any chances, so they took him to the hospital.

While Kipp was there, the rest of the quartet was performing at a church with Rasmus Krigstrom (lead of **Ringmasters** quartet) filling in for Kipp. (Old School and Ringmasters were scheduled to perform for the BABS Convention later in the day.) Back at the hospital, there was good news: A multitude of tests determined Kipp did not have a heart condition! The bad news: Before he could be released, Kipp was to see a specialist who would not be available for three days! They reached a compromise. He checked himself out to do the show, and with medical approval, agreed to come back after the performance for one last test and the results.

Kipp, already dressed in his performance costume from when the ambulance originally came to the hotel, headed straight for the performance. The quartet was set to go on—with Rasmus—when Kipp arrived backstage with eight minutes to spare. Ringmasters was ready to do whatever needed to be done. The show went on without a noticeable hitch. As barbershoppers, that's what we do.

"... any recordings of the Buffalo Bills?"

Then there are those times when *everything* goes right and maybe even an extra-special occurrence is aligned. Such was the case in when Old School headlined a **Minneapolis Commodores** show.

At the afterglow, a gentleman approached the quartet and asked, "Do you guys have any recordings of The Buffalo Bills?"

You mean the 1950 International Champion **Buffalo Bills**? The quartet that starred in *The Music Man*? "Lida Rose"? ... *ICE CREAM*? The quartet that put barbershop on Broadway? Yeah those guys!

As it turns out the fellow asking about the Bills was the son of Al Shea, lead of possibly the most recognizable barbershop quartet in history. Imagine how cool it was to meet him and spend a little one-on-one time with a relative who really didn't know whether the quartet would be familiar with his fathers' legendary work. A real happening!

Brothers ... "friendship and love to the end"

The story begins June 11, 2010, as "Beast" came off the risers at the end of a Vocal Majority rehearsal. He turned on his phone and was alarmed to find his inbox filled up with messages from his father. Joe's brother,

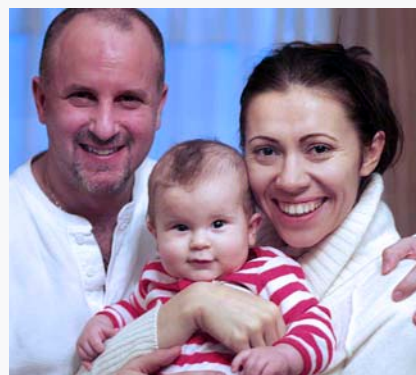
Jim, had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and had fewer than six months to live. Emotionally numbed, Joe spent a sleepless night mapping out what was, to him, a clear choice. His boss, his family and his quartet needed to know that he would soon be taking an open-ended leave of absence. No matter the cost, he would be with his brother in Phoenix so they could be together to the end in this final journey.

And so it was that Joe put his life on hold from October through Thanksgiving Day, 2010. When they were younger, Joe and Jim shared everything. Sports (especially baseball), foods (gyros in particular), and, of course, barbershop harmony. They sang in quartets and the chorus together. Inseparable in the beginning, it was only appropriate that they were inseparable through those weeks until Jim passed away.

During Jim's final weeks, they shared the laughter and tears, the memories of early years. The two greatest remembrances Joe carries with him are the final time the brothers went for one last gyro (a story too personal to share here) and Jim's last chorus rehearsal with **The Spirit of Phoenix**. In healthier days, he had been an active front row man, but Jim became so weak from the treatments that Joe would lift him up into the cab of his pickup truck and put Jim's wheelchair in the back. As the rehearsal came to a close, Brother Joe, with tears in his eyes, stood center back row while Jim directed "Keep The Whole World Singing" from his wheelchair. Jimmy passed away at 4:45 p.m. Thanksgiving Day with his wife, children and brother at his side. Joe then led the family in a bitter sweet prayer of thanks. Brothers ... friendship and love, to the end.

The acceptance speech: Awesome Joe credits the arrangers

As the competition week came to a close on Saturday night in Kansas City, Old School took the stage to accept the prize. How fitting it was when Joe Connelly



Jack Pinto (Br) is a 31-year Society member who was introduced to barbershop harmony by his grandfather, Frank Pinto. He is the director of the **Brothers in Harmony** from Hamilton Square, N.J. as well as his first chapter, the **Princeton, N.J. Garden Statesmen**, where his grandfather was a charter member. He credits Freddie King, Dr. Greg Lyne, Eddy Ryan (**Easternaires**), Ron Knickerbocker and Bob Disney as influences that helped him learn the style and perform barbershop harmony. Jack is president of 4M International Harmony Group, an organization dedicated to revitalizing male/female and mixed groups—from music, membership, marketing and morale. Jack and his wife, Olga, an artist management executive, are the proud parents of one-year-old Daniel. They reside in Hamilton Square, N.J.



Jim and Joe Krones were happy to be together, but devastated by the reason Joe was making the long-term visit



Joe Krones (Bs), son of barbershoppers Jim and Judy Krones, became a barbershopper at age 10 after hearing the 1971 champ **Gentlemen's Agreement**

perform on the local **Peoria Barbershop Chorus** chapter show. He



became assistant director of the chorus at age 16, and later served as primary director for 10 years. He and his brother Jimmy's first quartet, **Backstage Applause**, sang all over Illinois for 10 years. Joe later became district champ with **Renaissance, Bravo!, Cheers!** and **Stolen Basses**, and he spent six years as director of **West Towns Chorus**, including three appearances on the international stage. He currently sings with the **Vocal Majority** in Dallas, where he works as supervisor for the Arlington School District Food Service Department. A week after winning international gold in Kansas City, Joe married his high school sweetheart, Vickie. He is the father of grown "barbershop brats" Heather and Chase.

a half century as he credited the musical arrangers one by one, song by song, with the six songs Old School had sung to earn the trophy. It was a moment, an experience and an honor to hear these words. Each song chosen had special meaning to the group—the lyrics, the chord structure, the stories behind the men and their music.

So the next time you are teaching a tag—you know the big one or the soft tear-jerker—when your friends get that "lock and ring," smile and say "let's do it again" ... go ahead and give an extra smile back to your mates. Just know in your heart that you are passing along the art form by doing so—one tag at a time. You, too, are

took his turn at the mic, he chose to give. Family had already been recognized first, as it should be. He then acknowledged the coaches: Ron Knickerbocker and George "G for Get the Job Done" Gipp as being there for the entire journey. He likewise credited Darryl Flinn and Don Barnick for their valuable guidance and contributions. Then Joe did something that only a lifelong student of the hobby, who had walked this walk for decades, could do. He paid tribute to the men who helped create the music—the arrangers. He gave the barbershop world a history lesson spanning more than

helping to bridge barbershop generations. As barbershoppers, we all have a slice of champion in each of us. That's just the kind of people we are. ■

Six gold medal arrangements—a history

Below are the six arrangers and six songs that Old School honored during their 2011 championship run.

Lou Perry, "Little Town in the Old County Down," **Four Statesmen** (1967 champ). "One of the all-time great arrangers."

Buzz Haeger, "I Want a Girl," **Four Renegades** (1964 champ). Essentially a Society arrangement with Buzz's intro and tag, Renegades bass Tom Felgin won again with this in **Chicago News** (1981 champ). No changes were made other than substituting modern stars' names.

Walter Latzko, "As Time Goes By," **Buffalo Bills** (1950 champ). Although sung as originally arranged for the Bills, more famous tweaked versions were recorded by the **Suntones** (1961 champ) and **Bluegrass Student Union** (1978 champ).

David Wallace, "Ma, She's Making Eyes," **Rapsallions** (1984 champ). The only living arranger on this list, David got hooked on barbershop by a **Gentlemen's Agreement** (1971 champ) album; he arranged this song from that album as a tribute. Joe Connelly was once a replacement lead for the Rapsallions on a multi-month cruise ship gig, and chose this song in their honor.

Earl Moon, "Forgive Me," **FarWesterners**, (top 5 medalist in the 1970s, Earl sang bari). As a youth, Joe used to seek out Earl at Harmony College every year to soak up his wisdom. This song was both a tribute to Earl and to **Boston Common**, who sang it for their 1980 championship.

Larry Autenrieth, "Yes Sir, That's My Baby/Ain't She Sweet," **Town and Country Four** (1963 champ). Larry penned many medleys, including this for his quartet in 1959. This tribute was both to the quartet and to TC4 bass Leo Sisk's son, Mike, a long-time friend who inspired Joe's barbershop trivia obsession when both were about age 14.



The newly announced champions thanked their families and their coaches, and then did something unusual: they thanked their arrangers one by one and shared the history of each of the six winning songs.

LORIN MAY



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THE **HARMONIZER**


"En Armonia" thriving in Spain

More than 600 barbershoppers from around the globe gathered together in fellowship, chords ringing from stages, corridors and far corners of nearly every room. Such was the essence of the Spanish Association of Barbershop Singers' Fourth Annual Convention in March.

In only their fourth year of existence, this affiliate of the Barbershop Harmony Society hosted a gathering that featured friends from throughout Europe (including Britain, Ireland, The Netherlands) to hold its most successful convention yet in Benalmedena on the Costa del Sol. Starting with the Opening Ceremony and Fun Show on Thursday night, a weekend containing four contests, two shows, an afterglow and a "scratch quartet contest" ended with hugs and kisses all around on Sunday morning.

To experience barbershop at its basic best and meet hundreds of new friends, plan to attend their Fifth Annual Convention in Alicante, Spain (near Barcelona) in April, 2013.

— Alan Lamson, Society President



Harmony thriving in North America

More information on Harold Hill is coming in the next issue, but here's an encouraging last-minute tidbit: This month's *Harmonizer* mail list is well over 1,000 more than the mail list for the previous issue. That's a net gain of well over 1,000 members in only six weeks! Whatever y'all are doing right now, keep doing it!



Barbershop earning A+ with music educators

In the last issue of *The Harmonizer* was a story on the great success **Sound of the Rockies** experienced at the Colorado Music Educators Association's Conference. Now, the positive impressions continue with **The Vocal Majority**, (SWD) **Great Northern Union** (LOL) and Society Music Educator **Mike O'Neill** all getting quality face-time with influential educators across the country.

The Vocal Majority recently performed for the 2012 Southwestern American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Convention in Dallas. Their set included seven songs, all of which received enthusiastic responses,

North Central Division Conference of the ACDA. Selected to perform after a blind audition process, their performance received two rousing standing ovations and plenty of compliments. Kevin Morrissee, an area high school music teacher, summed



GNU received two rousing standing ovations from ACDA

including a standing ovation for the final song "Joshua." One school choir director commented, "We missed your ACDA performance in Oklahoma City two years ago, but heard it was unbelievable. After witnessing your performance tonight, I must say it

was beyond anything we could have imagined!" Also, from a young college glee club director, "Your chorus totally blew me away. I just wasn't ready for what I saw! It was spectacular!"

Great Northern Union had equal success at the



The Vocal Majority wowed music educators at the Southwestern ACDA Convention

up all the comments, "Best concert of the entire convention ... a choir that moves in performance, that looks and feels the music, that actually looks like they are enjoying what they are doing, and are musically fabulous ... yea!"

In February, Society Music Educator Mike O'Neill took part in a presentation at the Arizona Music Educator's Convention entitled "*The Skills Barbershop Singing Will Bring to Your Choral Department*," along with Lori Lyford, director of the Sweet Adelines champion **Scottsdale Chorus** and high school choir director. Using some of Lori's students and both a men's and women's ensemble, they gave a 60-minute presentation.

Barbershopper's country music career getting national exposure

Richie Lawson, a 19-year-old bass with the **Sound of the Rockies** (RMD), also wears another hat as a country singer—and he's a very good one, too. Just ask *American Idol*! During this past season, Richie (going by his stage name Richie Law) made it all the way to the Top 40 out of 134,000 contestants, and walked the infamous make-or-break Green Mile for a talk with the judges.

"The *American Idol* experience has opened up many doors. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with some of the best people in the industry and learn about the production, song choices, logistics and various obstacles that are all included in a show of this caliber," he said via e-mail. "If I am fortunate enough to return for

another season, I will definitely use what I've learned. Cowboys get bucked off, but they get right back on!"

Richie credits his high school music director, Darin Drown of **Storm Front**, for a big part of his success, saying "he is one of the most influential people in my life, a testament to choral music in our schools." Richie was a member of **52eighty** when they won the International Youth Chorus Festival in 2010 and has sung with the Sound of the Rockies for three years. He is a freshman at NE Wesleyan College in Lincoln, Neb. on a vocal performance scholarship.

This summer, Richie will open for five major acts, including Jewel, Darius Rucker and Darryl Worley, and BMI has scheduled him as a featured artist in a showcase during the CMA Music Festival in Nashville in June. Hits to his website, www.FriendsofRichieLaw.com, topped one million in February.

We'll be watching for you, Richie, and good luck!



Richie Lawson



Richie Lawson, here singing bass with Sound of the Rockies, trekked from Denver to Aspen to Las Vegas in his journey to the Top 40 in Hollywood.



The beat goes on for the Metronomes; still together after 60 years

During the Korean conflict in the '50s, four lively young Air Force barbershop singers were recruited to perform as a quartet at Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City, S.D. Tenor John Cook, lead Don Richmond, bari Wyman Schmidt and bass Al Pitts called themselves **The Metronomes**, and, as befitting many barbershoppers, they became fast, life-long friends.

They sang at many official and non-official functions both on base and in Rapid City. In 1954 they entered the World Wide Air Force Contest, which they won, earning them a trip to Washington, D.C. for the world finals. Just before they were to

go, Al Pitts was rotated out and was temporarily replaced by bass Bill Hopper. The group competed in that contest as **The Afterburners** and won the World Air Force Championship. That year, the Society Convention was also in D.C., and the Air Force invited the Society's judges to judge their competition as well.

Following the competition, the group had the honor of meeting their

state Senator, Karl Mundt, who at the time was Chair of the Army-McCarthy Hearings. Mundt invited the group to sit in as his guests for a day.

In the 60 years since they ended their tours of duty, the guys have maintained close bonds while living at far-flung locations throughout the country, getting together every other year or so since the 80's when their wives had the idea for a reunion. Schmidt sings with the **Bozeman, Mont.**

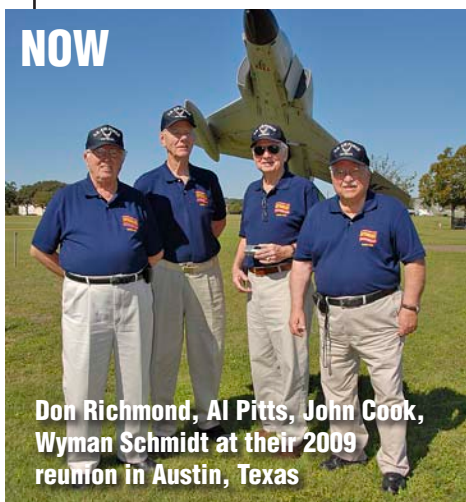
Chapter, Pitts with the **Mt. Rushmore S. Dak. Chapter**, Richmond with the **Benton Harbor-St. Joseph Mich. Chapter**, and Cook with the **Northwest Louisiana Chapter**.

The 2009 Austin Texas reunion found all four octogenarians (pictured at left at Bergstrom Air Force Base) in fine singing form. Joy and hilarity ensued as they sang in every conceivable location from the Texas State Capitol rotunda to the grocery store meat counter, serenading many a waitress along the way.

Unfortunately, Shreveport member John Cook suffered a stroke before the next reunion, and he was unable to travel. Not to be denied, the other three fellows converged on Shreveport, La. March 20-22 for an advance celebration of John's 83rd birthday. His three old friends and singing partners, ages 85, 83, & 82, traveled once again by plane, train, and automobile to celebrate over 60 years of friendship and harmony and to enjoy a few days of camaraderie, revelry and music.

They're all hoping that Cook will be able to travel by summer, and that all four will be able to meet in Portland for another magical reunion.

NOW



Don Richmond, Al Pitts, John Cook, Wyman Schmidt at their 2009 reunion in Austin, Texas

THEN



John Cook, Wyman Schmidt, Al Pitts and Don Richmond sing to the beauty queen at a 1950 community event in Rapid City, S.D.

HEY GUYS – DON'T MISS THE BOAT!

Over last summer, the East Aurora, N.Y. Chapter (SLD) held four free concerts aboard the famous U.S.S. Little Rock at the Buffalo, N.Y. waterfront. This was just part of a busy 2011 schedule that included a successful Singing Valentines day, spring show, Fourth of July at the University of Buffalo, a spaghetti supper served to 450 people, a benefit for a local food bank, and a Christmas caravan to five different medical facilities.



A new moo-sical cow-medy: "Dire Days at the Dairy"

Like to groan at puns? The city of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. recently celebrated its 100th Anniversary, and in keeping with the style of theatre popular when the city was founded, the **Northland Barbershop Chorus** (PIO) created and performed an original melodrama. *Dire Days at the Dairy* or *Udder Mayhem*, centers around a struggling family dairy farm in Bar River, Ont. Our hero, (everybody cheer!) Beau Vine and his not-so-sharp sidekick, Mookie Whey, come to the aid of widow Elsie-Sue MacDonald and her sweet daughter Beatrice (everybody say awww!), in fighting off the dastardly villain (boos and hisses here) Dr. Salvatore (Sal) Monella, who is trying to steal their farm.

Written by Bob Shami and Stephen Patterson, the show used a small cast of five veteran actors recruited from the local theatre community, in addition to the more than 50 singers in the chorus. This production was not only a lot of fun, but also a great way to expose non-barbershop artists in the community to the hobby.

The show was headlined by 2009 international champ **Crossroads**, who received three standing ovations from this particularly warm and appreciative audience. They responded with a rare treat—an encore, "Roll, Jordan, Roll." ■



The cast and chorus of "Dire Days at the Dairy" milk the laughs for all they're worth, while foiling the fiendish plans of the villain, Dr. Sal Monella, whose evil wheys were attributed to his having been raised in a bad "culture." Booo! Hiss!

CHAPTER ETERNAL

Society members reported as deceased between Feb. 15 and April 15, 2012. E-mail updates to membership@barbershop.org.

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Barbershop Harmony Society) is a non-profit organi-
zation operating in the United States and Canada.

Mission

The Barbershop Harmony Society brings men
together in harmony and fellowship to enrich lives
through singing.

Vision

To be the premier membership organization for men
who love to sing.



THE TAG

Joe Liles, Tagmaster!!



Carolina became one of Milwaukee's best

Back in 1990, I believe it was, the **Milwaukee Festival City Chorus** was searching for a director. They had run out of ideas, and a couple of their fellows drove down to the headquarters (in Kenosha, Wis. at the time) and approached me on the matter. I agreed to help 'em out until they could find someone. Well, those barbershop nuts just sang up a storm and didn't take care of their director-search business until I retired about 12 years later.

What a fun time we had! Lots of camaraderie and ringin' chords like crazy. We rehearsed in the basement of a Catholic church. After the regular part of the meeting was over, a handy bar area was available with soft drinks and a yellowish substance made in Milwaukee, plus chips and pretzels. It was *Tag*

Time! We even had members and guests showing up just for that activity and they were encouraged to do so.

One very special friend, Tom Witt, was always there to teach and sing his favorite tag. No one got away without singing it. I was thinking about that tag recently and wondered what the source of it could be. I've asked around and no one seems to know. Tom Witt is no longer with us, but his spirit and love of singing will never be forgotten by those who knew and loved him. Well, here's the tag, both male and female versions, as

I remember it. If anyone knows the source, let me know and I'll make that correction on the copy that's in www.barbershop.org/tags. And, Tom ... thanks for the memories. ■



CAROLINA TAG

Words, Music, Arranger UNKNOWN

Tenor Lead

1 2 3 4

Car - o - li - na, Car - o - li - na, Car - o - li - na in the morn.

Bari Bass

CAROLINA TAG

for female voices

Words, Music, Arranger UNKNOWN

Tenor Lead

1 2 3 4

Car - o - li - na, Car - o - li - na, Car - o - li - na in the morn.

Bari Bass

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