



The Multi-Award Winning Newsletter of the Greater Little Rock Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

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# Chapter Commits to Musical Excellence

Terry Mercing, Director Emeritus

The chapter voted unanimously last Monday to adopt a program designed to elevate the musical skills of each of our singers and to raise the standard of our performances. I will not repeat here everything in the new program since all of you have the list of steps in the program. I will, however, comment on some of the most significant changes we can expect.



First, and of most importance, is the fundamental fact that this program requires **every man** in the chorus to change the way in which he views his hobby. **Change will not occur in our music and performances until every one of us accepts that it is our own growth in skills and attitude that will make the difference**, not the change of the other guys on the risers. That bears repeating. **No one** in the chorus will be able to continue doing things

exactly as they have been in the past.

This is the first and most fundamental change that must occur. **We must come to our chapter meeting ready to be quiet and focused** while we are on the risers to allow Don and Steve to accomplish what that have planned. We must stop the wise-guy comments (including myself), we must stop trying to correct the guy beside us (that is Don and Steve's job) and we must pay attention, listen, and sing. Wisecracking and other light-hearted activities are for times in the chapter meeting when we are not on the risers.



**Marvin Chism,** Bari in **U4ia**, is leaving Arkansas to return to his native Ohio this week. Good luck Marvin and Sue.

**We must work more at home.** That includes learning new songs using the learning tapes, a keyboard, or whatever method we choose. But we must spend time outside of rehearsal so that we do not have to go a step backward each week to learn words and notes. We must also practice our planned per-

*See Commitment (Continued on page 2)*

	<p>See pages 6 and 7 for Valentines stories and photographs.</p>	
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**Commitment**

*(Continued from page 1)*

formance movements on the songs at home to a tape. This will allow chorus time to be used to better advantage.

We are going to have to do a better job of attending chorus meetings so we can absorb the artistry that Don and Steve will give us.

We are going to have to spend more time learning the meaning of the song so that we can effectively communicate the meaning along with the words and notes.

We are going to have to begin listening to what is going on around us while we are on the risers. Are we individually singing too loud or too soft? Are we following the dynamic plan? Are we matching vowels? Are we beginning and ending our word in synch with the entire chorus? Are we singing rhythms consistently with the rest of the chorus? We are going to have to become more aware while we are on the risers to be able to determine if we are contributing to the performance or detracting from it.

We are going to insist that each man who sings become involved in a program of personal vocal improvement through voice lessons. We are currently looking into ways to accomplish this. I envision that there will be several alternatives. We will attempt to develop a professional relationship with one, or perhaps several professional voice teachers. We will attempt to negotiate a group price to keep costs under control. We probably will try to have some voice instruction available on Monday nights as well as other times when members want to go to their teacher. If members want to choose their own voice teachers we will support



Director Emeritus,  
**Terry Mercing**

that. To a limited extend Don, Steve, and I will be able to do some training ourselves on Mondays, but our time is limited. We envision that some men who are highly motivated in this area may take several lessons a month. Others may limit their voice work to one lesson a month, which is the minimum our program specifies. If finances are an issue for someone who wants to do the vocal work, let us know and we will work together and find a way to make it happen.

How will we know that you are taking voice training? Other than by observation or discussion with the voice teachers we are using, your qualification tapes and the observations of your section leaders will tell us. We will be able to hear a difference in your individual voices not too long after you begin serious work.

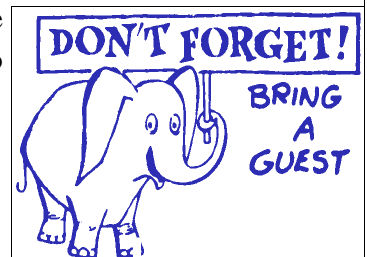
If you decide not to take voice lessons, or if you do not take what your voice teacher advises you to heart and improve your individual singing skills, you may find yourself not qualifying to perform with the chorus as the standards for tape qualifications slowly rise over time.

Remember that this commitment that we recommended and that you adopted unanimously affects the way we sing all the time. It is not just a competition issue. Our chorus level of singing is going to rise for every song we sing in rehearsal, in all public performances, on our show, and also at competition.



**Marvin will be missed in U4ia.**

This is the most significant commitment to excellence that has ever been made by this chorus. Let's all work together to find ways to make it work and to enjoy the process of excellence as much as we have enjoyed getting to this point.



## DIRECTLY SPEAKING

By Don Snow

### THE CHALLENGE

continued

In January, I challenged you to twelve "What If's". Last month we covered #2 on the list bringing us to:

**#3. What if everyone had worked on the music or with the learning tape the whole week before?**

Now it seems we are already in the thick of this one! As the chapter has adopted the 10 recommendations of the Music team, we are beginning to see more ownership of the performance package by each member. This goes WAY beyond our competition set. This idea of ownership follows along a whole different path.

With each member working independently of the chorus collective, each member takes on more ownership of the performance or song. By making the learning process a part of your daily life (not just three hours on a given Monday night), the learning curve shortens dramatically. By reading through the music while listening to the corresponding learning tape, your ability to learn and recollect music dramatically increases. This is a process whereby you read (see), listen (hear) and recite (vocalize) all at the same time.

It is different than on Monday night where we start and stop, deal with interruptions and distractions, and try to "fit" in with the other parts around us. For some this is no problem! For others, it dramatically extends the learning process and assists in a higher frustration level!

The last thing we want to do is frustrate our members so this is why we chose this methodology of learning music. It is faster and tends to help our brain function as



well!

So here is how it works! Each day set aside 15 minutes minimum and try the following. With your music in hand, listen to the learning tape for that song as you follow along silently! Repeat a second time. On the third time, vocalize with tape by following along on a neutral sound like "Dee" and watching the notes only. Please do not hum. Did you miss any notes? If so only repeat the section giving you the MOST trouble and only that section. Every note exact is not the

goal of this learning method, but it will come in to play later.

In all, you should listen to the song about five times, while following along in the music. After a few days, you will find yourself ahead in the music and wanting to look away. Please don't do that quite yet. You should be able to sing the entire song, while looking at the music, without missing any notes or words before you start the memorizing process. This is where most people have the problem, they try to memorize music they don't know!

That's it! That's all there is to it! You can repeat the same song or try another but follow the same technique. If you do that only 15 minutes a day, seven days a week, you will learn more songs, more accurately than ever before! If you choose only one song each week, you will cut your learning time in half or maybe even 2/3rds!

I look forward to your continued progress in becoming the singer/performer you want to be! Good luck! See you Monday!

Don

# Polecat Program Back on Track

By Lamar Setliff

Quartet Activities Coordinator

The polecat program is going again! If you have been active in the program, check the chapter website (in the “members only” section) to see how you stand on the songs. Some of you are very close to your second pin, and others are about half way to your first pin. Many of you need to get started in the program. Being able to “hold your own” in a quartet instills confidence and will make you a better singer, which in turn benefits the chorus. Do not be afraid to ask others to sing with you—as you see on the website there are many members who have already qualified, and they would be willing to accommodate you. Polecat learning tapes are available—ask **Art Bohannon**. Prior rehearsals are necessary before attempting to qualify. Rehearse either before or after chapter meetings, or if you are real serious, maybe an evening during the week. Several of our present and past registered quartets were “born” in the polecat program. The most fun about learning a voice part in the twelve polecat songs is to be able to go to division, district and national conventions and sing with new friends who know these same songs. In addition it prepares you for the chapter novice quartet contest held each summer.

If you wish to attempt to qualify please let me know before Monday nights. I also need to know who will be singing with you (others in the quartet could also be attempting to qualify). I will then arrange for qualified folks to listen to you and let me know if you “passed”. No embellishments of the written arrangement in the polecat book are allowed.

Yes, it is frightful for most guys to stand before their own chorus and sing in a quartet (that includes most registered quartets!), but don’t let that discourage you--remember we are all friends and we want to support each other.

# Division Contest

By Lou Anderson

In just a few short weeks, March 27th to be exact, the Diamond State Chorus will ONCE AGAIN "WOW" the teeming crowds at a Division Contest. This time it is in Hot Springs, AR. and we will be in competition with our old rivals, Music Central out of Central Oklahoma. The BIG unknown this year will be the Founder's Chorus from Tulsa who will be getting back into the contest mode after a year of 'standing out' during a rebuilding phase. Fun City Chorus from Hot Springs, is the hometown favorite with a new Director and this year Host Chorus for the Contest and Convention.

Unlike in recent years, the contest is NOT spread over two days. Fun City has elected to return to the schedule of years past and do everything in one day, Saturday the 27th. Take a look at the Southwestern District Web Site at <http://www.swd.org> for full particulars on when we sing and when our evaluations will occur. Also, to see when our Quartets are singing in both the first round and second round, which is only two hours apart.

Make hotel reservations EARLY if you are staying late Saturday night OR if you are going in Friday night to avoid an early drive on Saturday morning. See you in Hot Springs in LESS than 30 days!!



## Happy Birthday

3/2 Guy Veazy

## Happy Anniversary

3/4 Dohnae & Dean Sikes

3/21 Camille & Steve Ostergren

3/23 Peggy & Burt Wilkerson

3/28 Sue & Marv Chism

# Zirconia Goes Solo Aboard Bahamian Cruise

Our sources indicate that **Jim Linsley**, bass for **Zirconium**, took an unauthorized leave of absence lately to take a cruise with his wife and celebrate their 35th anniversary. Unbeknownst to his quartet, this was actually a ploy to test the waters of his so-low career as lead singer. Rumor has it that Jim had become disillusioned because his name only appears twice in the introduction of **Zirconium** (Jim, Jim, Mark & Mark). In light of that, Jim tried out his new group called JIM (short for Jim, Illena and Mickie). When reached for comment Jim said the ladies were much easier to work with and to look at. It was also easier to harmonize with them since they just danced.

Jim also worked with other professionals. Here he is devoutly singing "When I Fall in Love" (it will be forever) to the first of several impromptu audience participants. The plan was for the first lady to slap him (which she did) and run off stage so Jim could find another lady to devoutly sing to. Things went awry when the second lady also slapped



Jim and audience members started coming up from off stage to be sung to. That wouldn't have been so bad except the participating audience members were guys. Jim says "Sometimes you just have to think on your feet".

JIM, seen here singing Doo-Wah-Diddy-Diddy to a Latin beat. Jim, being a quick learner, learned to speak Latin while on the trip.



Jim sings "When I Fall In Love, It Will Be Until I Get Slapped Again".

# Scholarship Development

by **Jim Linsley**

I just got off the phone with **Jim Henry**, (Gas House Gang-bass/Choral Music Director-Lindenwood University) and he has given me a commitment of two \$5000 scholarships (total of \$10,000-they could offer more) to the top two students to audition through our scholarship program. These scholarships come with "a high probability of being renewed after the freshman year. Also, they do not require a major or minor in music which would require no change in our scholarship program at this point. We are still discussing the logistics on how to facilitate the decision etc but I think you will agree this is a tremendous step in the right direction. I am also working to explore the possibility of further participation with universities and colleges within the borders of Arkansas.

All of this would be available in addition to our own \$1000 scholarship.

# Joke Du Jour

## FINAL EXAM

The blonde reported for her university final examination that consisted of yes/no type questions. She takes her seat in the examination hall, stares at the question paper for five minutes and then, in a fit of inspiration, takes out her purse, removes a coin and starts tossing the coin, marking the answer sheet: Yes, for Heads, and No, for Tails. Within half an hour she is all done, whereas the rest of the class is still sweating it out. During the last few minutes she is seen desperately throwing the coin, muttering and sweating. The moderator, alarmed, approaches her and asks what is going on. "I finished the exam in half an hour, but now I'm rechecking my answers."

Submitted by **Michael Fess**

# Singing Valentines stories

## Grand Larceny

by Jack Larsen

1. While we were walking to a gig in downtown Little Rock, we were whistled at by some of the construction workers working on an adjacent site. (It had to be our baritone.)

2. After delivering a valentine in an office area to a male recipient (that was a first for us), one of the onlookers recognized Bill Ragan, but did not recognize Matt Tatus . . . even though it was Matt's dad! (Must have been the hair.)

3. After delivering a valentine at a different venue, the recipient asked if Matt was Elwin Jones' son! (We referred her to the previous confused father.)

4. Another time, between the singing of a two song set, Bill Ragan asked the recipient and her female "friend" (they were obviously more than friends) if they were sisters! Bill was somewhat confused why his three singing partners had some difficulty getting through the next number.

5. Although it was extremely moving delivering a valentine to a bed-ridden elderly lady, she kept closing here eyes for somewhat long periods during our singing. After one particularly long period, Elwin dropped a few notes. When asked about it afterward, he said he thought she had expired and he didn't know if we should continue!

6. After this same delivery, we were posing for a picture with the recipient (remember, frail, elderly, crippled with arthritis, bedridden) and Bill, sitting on the edge of the bed started to tell this obviously ill lady how his joints hurt when the weather starts to turn like it was (it had started snowing by then). After looking at this poor lady's hands and feet, crippled with arthritis, we decided it was time to take Bill out of there.



**Valentine Central, from left, Eloise Oldridge, Steve Purdy, and Lou Anderson**

7. We had one recipient (a nurse at a hospital) walk out on us. We were assured by the rest of the nursing staff that it was not our singing, but that she was just a non-valentine believer.

8. Our last delivery (9:00 PM) was extremely well received and when we were finished, the purchaser offered us a glass of wine, which we refused since we had 5" of snow to drive through and Jack was not a person who could be tempted by drink, but as we were leaving, the purchaser invited us to contact the manager of one of his restaurants if we wanted to perform for a bigger audience. The restaurant happened to be Juanita's, well known for its live entertainment offerings. (Although somewhat livelier and louder.) This could be fun just to see the shocked look on the patrons.

All-in-all, it was an enjoyable two days with some great chords rung in a few lobbies, restaurants, hallways, offices, and hospital corridors; and some great memories for our mental scrapbooks. Everyone who has not been part of a Singing Valentine Quartet before should give it serious consideration for next year. It's a blast!

*(Continued on page 7)*

**More Valentines**

*(Continued from page 6)*

**Jon'z Boyz**

by Michael Fess

"Jon'z Boyz" delivered a valentine to a five year old in day care from her mom. We sang on our knees to her and all her classmates.

**Diamonds in the Rough**

by Don Francis

After delivering a Valentine to a teacher , in her classroom, this little boy came up to me and said " YOU SOUND JUST LIKE MUSIC " That made my day; It just confirmed to me, why I am a part of the " Barbershop Singing experience." To strive to " Sound like MUSIC "

**POPS**

**My Singing Valentine "adventure 2004"**

by Arthur Dercksen

We had the pleasure of coaching a Quintet (two gals singing Leads) from the Clarksville HS Choir and driving them and their director on Friday. With publicity of two radio stations, University of Ozarks TV, Flyers and business cards, they started Friday morning with 7 engagements and ended with singing 17 paid gigs, gathering more as they were heard. Nell manned "Valentine Central" with communication to the car.

They sang over the PA at WalMart Supercenter and Harvest Foods. This gained them an afternoon engagement at Ozark Development Center. The ensemble sang twice at the Johnson County Senior Citizen Center: first in the early morning to the father of the School System Administrator, and then to the lunch folks (paid by the Director of Activities). They sang paid performances at each of the five school levels: students at the Senior, Junior High Schools, Middle and



Ted DeWeese brought his daughter to Valentines Central and asked several men to help him embarrass her.

Upper Elementary . The performance at the K - 1st grade Primary was to the teacher/mother of one of the Leads. This performance was in the hall-way so we had four other classes listening. At the Junior HS, three classes and their teachers, crowded the doorway and walls of the classroom.

The last engagement of the ensemble was for a Westark HS teacher who was taken to the Ozark Foothills Little Theater's Dinner Theater performance of "Arsenic and Old Lace". They had an enthusiastic captive audience there as well.

I now have five young people and a director interested in Harmony Explosion and anything we can find for the girls.

Two weeks ago we were to have a boys and a girls quartette. Come a Monday rehearsal, only two of the girls showed and one boy plus a choir-member friend. I had made learning tapes and given music out to the director several weeks prior. Having to come up with something to perform, the director put together the quintet using the two girls unified on Lead. Come the evening performance, one of the Leads and the Baritone could not make it due to prior engagements, so I donned my Tux and covered the Baritone. It was a super fun day which lifted many a soul. One of the restaurants in town had hoped to engage them for Saturday evening (tips, charge for a polaroid picture and then a cover by the restaurant owner). We are going to pursue that for special occasions, including Mother's Day, birthdays and anniversaries.



We sang to her, and she was!

# Vice Presidential Page

## Komments from Karl (and Editorial perspective)

by Karl Krebs, VP Program



Eighteen years ago we sat in chairs most of the evening, and then complained if Terry wanted us to stand to sing a song. We didn't hardly warm up our voices. We had fun and thought we were goooood. Then we decided that perhaps it would help if we stood more than we sat. Then along came

some fool, and said that if we taped individually perhaps our music leaders could help individuals with the rough spots. I think it was that same fool that then said we should individually tape qualify before we could stand on the competition and performing risers.

So what has all this gotten us? We are the premiere barbershop in the state, among the top 15% in the country. We have altered the traditional thinking of our audiences who used to relate barbershop harmony to red & white striped vests, arm garters and straw hats.

So now we take another major step forward. It is going to be tougher for some to accept new standards, but it needs to be perfectly clear to all, each of us can improve in some area. By accepting your "cube" on the risers, we accept being the best we can be in all areas of performance. That also means, that when your "cube" on the risers is empty, you need to raise your level of commitment.

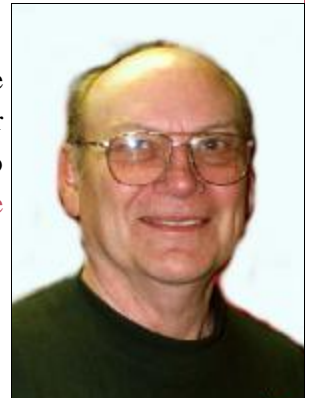
The sound of true barbershop harmony cannot be matched by any other means. It takes matched voices blending as one to ring those heavenly chords, Let's ring em!

## Ripley's "Believe or else!"

by Richard "Rip" Ripley, Treasurer

Rip said,

"George, you may already have something about ad sales for our show, but it isn't too early to start selling them. I already have one ad requested."



## Members Matter

by Paul Moore

Wow! Seems like last week we started a brand new year, and here it is March already!



We've been developing teams and plans to attract new members and to KEEP the members we already have. We will have some special guest nights and some new promotional materials to help attract singers. We're shooting for 20+ new members, and we're aiming at good singers.

To do that, we need LOTS of help - from YOU. I can't tell you the best way for you to approach them, but I can tell you that you encounter more guys who would love to sing with us than you imagine. Figure out how to make that invitation! If we don't invite them, who will?

*Coming Events*

March 5-7 SE Division Convention - New Orleans

March 12-14, NW Division Convention - Oklahoma City

Mar 17 **St. Patrick's Day**

Mar. 19-21 SW Division Convention and International Prelims - San Marcos, Texas

March 26-28 NE Division Convention - Hot Springs, AR

Apr 15 (Thursday) at Hot Springs Village for the Symphony Guild

Apr 25 Scholarship Auditions

Apr 26 Tux Performance at Cabot

Jun 5 Fun Fest, Hot Springs

Jun 11/12 Annual Show, CAC, North Little Rock

Jun 27-Jul 4 International Convention – Louisville, KY

Jul-Aug Annual Pot Luck Family Social and Novice Quartet Competition

Oct 22-24 SWD District Convention and Contest in Dallas

Oct 21-23, 2005 SW District Convention – San Antonio

Oct 20-22, 2006 SW District Convention – Corpus Christi

Oct 2007 SW District Convention - Corpus Christi

*Year 2004 Leadership*

**Board Members:**

President	Elwin Jones
Secretary	Bob Cox
Treasurer	Rip Ripley
VP Music	David Stafford
VP Devel/Mktg	Burt Wilkerson
VP Membership	Paul Moore
VP Program	Karl Krebs
Board	Lou Anderson
Past President	Larry Walton

**Music Team:**

Music Director	Don Snow
Associate Director	Steve Purdy
Director Emeritus	Terry Mercing

**Section Leaders:**

Tenor	Gary Hawkins
Lead	David Stafford
Asst	Mark Hotchkiss
Bari	Steve Purdy
Bass	Terry Mercing
Asst	Jim Linsley

Audition Coordinator	Terry Mercing
Librarian	Todd Tucker

**Committee Chairmen:**

Show	Max Watkins
Scholarship	Jim Linsley
Valentines	Tim Copeland
Quartet Activities	Lamar Setliff

**Special Assignments:**

Performance Coord.	Lou Anderson
Uniform Manager	Bernie Powell
Bulletin Editor	George Tribble
Web Master	Richard Zelnick