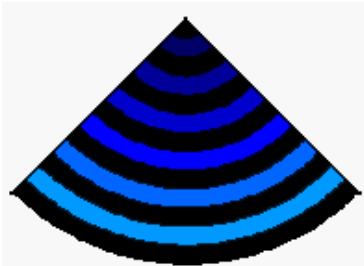


The monthly chapter newsletter of the Alexandria Harmonizers



The Echo

July/August 2003

Editor:

Quartet Reporter:

Family Reporter:

History Columnist:

Photographers:

Postal Distribution:

Echo Webpage:

Scipio Garling scipio.garling@verizon.net

Brad Jones bwj@nrc.gov

Roger Day onegr8rday@aol.com

Jack Pitzer editorjack@aol.com

TJ Jones tjones453@comcast.net

J.McKendree John_McKendree@msn.com

Tom Griffith mrgriff@pressroom.com

C. Bermudez CBermudezAH@aol.com

Back and Forward

Back from Montreal!

Forward to Louisville!

Back and forward; it's the rhythm of the dance, of learning, of life. One step back, two steps forward!

In this issue we debrief ourselves from the International Chorus Competition in Montreal. We take a step back and look at ourselves and our past, enjoy each other's company and raise a glass to the good old days that are still to come.

In this issue of the Echo, look for:

A surprise message for PhatCats;

A bad toupee;

Montreal as experienced by a participant, an audience member, and at-home viewer;

inspiring words from Director Emeritus John Hohl;

a really big ship;

a briefing from the music team on where we go from here;

breakfast with Bill Aarhus;

and, of course, no issue of the Echo would be complete without spherical plasmatic aliens.



This issue is dedicated to the late Myles Reynolds (pictured above).



From the Togetherness Breakfast in Montreal

by Bill Aarhus

My Harmonizer brothers, Harmonettes, Alexandria Harmonizer family and friends: I am honored to join you as an Alexandria Harmonizer. I am honored to be a member of the Class of 2003, here for our first Harmonizer Internationals, along side seven extraordinary men; one of whom especially inspires such devotion to our craft, and who now leads us as our new director. And I am honored to be asked to address you at the start of a new Harmonizer era at Internationals.

When Gary Bibbens approached me about sharing some thoughts, he said, “Say something inspirational, take about seven minutes, and... well... just say something like you said at retreat weekend.” I informed Gary that I did not speak at retreat weekend... but that I was nonetheless flattered to have been so carefully selected for the task at hand.

Gentlemen, isn't what we just did for Rob – singing four-part harmony in the barbershop style to create a moment for family and friends to cherish – isn't that what this is all about? It's sharing love with family and friends through the manner of communication we love most – through barbershop.

My Dad taught me my love of barbershop. And he was a member of the old Harmonizer guard. Dad joined the Harmonizers in 1959, and sang with a fellow on the risers named Bob. Dad and Bob became dear friends. So when Mom and Dad married, they invited a small number of their closest friends, including this fellow from the risers – Bob Millard, and his wife Maxine. Bob was called out of town and couldn't make it to the wedding, but Maxine came. And what a thrill it is 42 years later for Maxine to address the Harmonizers before we left Virginia, and to have her here with us today in Montreal. Maxine - Mom and Dad send their love.

Many of you share with me in the great loss of Mr. Barbershop, Wilbur Sparks. This is our first Internationals without Wilbur. For those of you who didn't know him, he was a gentle man, a Harmonizer extraordinaire, and a past President of the International Society. Wilbur was also my Dad's carpool to Harmonizer practice weekly for several years. And Dad tells me that Wilbur was quite the carpool!

After Dad had been a Harmonizer a few years, a new lead joined his section – a young fellow by the name of Scotty Werner, and they quickly became friends. Decades later, long after my family had relocated from Virginia in the 1960s, Scotty called Dad regarding his Society silver-medalist quartet, *Vaudeville*. “Bob,” he said, “we're headed to Internationals again this year and we could really use someone to handle the details for us on-site, to get us where we need to go. Would you...” Scotty didn't even have to finish the sentence. A chance to go to Internationals with a top-flight quartet? *Dad could hardly contain his excitement.*

Barbershop is Dad's favorite hobby – it's his “thing!” His dream was to go to Internationals – to maybe someday sing on that stage – the place he most wanted to go. Unfortunately, the time for Dad to realize that dream has passed.

But he'd been to Internationals as a spectator and, even if he couldn't be on stage, he didn't let that deter him from enjoying the experience of Internationals to its fullest. And now Scotty was giving Dad the opportunity to return to Internationals – the place Dad *most wanted to return to.*

So would it surprise you to learn that Dad is giddy with excitement over me, here, with the Harmonizers today?



Breakfast speech

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And do you think that, when I'm on that stage, I'll be carrying with me those who cannot be here? Some who, like Dad, could not make the trip, and others who are no longer with us – friends like Wilbur Sparks and Dad's old buddy Bob Millard?

Do you think there are over a hundred such stories here today? That if I went around to every table in this room and asked each one of you who you are carrying with you – family and friends who cannot be here for one reason or another – Gentlemen, couldn't we fill an additional arena with just those people?

Now, just maybe that is what drives you today – the thought of *returning* to these absent family and friends – to see them, whether soon in this life, or in what lies beyond. Or, maybe, like Dad, what drives you today is *returning* to a moment with friends, like Internationals.

Gentlemen, whatever it is that drives you – the thing you cannot contain your excitement over – whether it is *returning* to the International stage, or whatever or whomever you are *returning* to – Gentlemen, *that* is your personal Dixie. And there is a paddle-wheel boat leaving the Bell Center today that will take you there, if only you let it through – to show in our faces – in our fiery performance – and in our musicality on that stage.

The good news I bring to you today gentlemen is that we have done this... together... already. Remember on Thursday when Dr. Greg Lyne dropped by to give us all his prescription for what ailed us in *Dixie* – we lightened it up, and the first person we got to share it with was Dwain Brobst. Dwain was so thrilled about how we communicated our excitement about returning to Dixie that he almost admitted Virginia's a southern state!

So today, around 3 p.m., I invite you to return to that magical place – the one you cannot contain your excitement over – to your personal Dixie. And to let everyone know how excited you are to return there! I invite you to do so knowing that you have done it before, so that you may once again lead the way, as we guide our audience to this exciting place together.

Lastly, gentlemen, in the brilliance of our musical team and the beauty of this package, before we return to our personal Dixie in the second half, we first get to take the audience to their personal Dixie – the place they most wish to *return* to - in the first half, with Auld Lang Syne. The good news, once again, is that we have done this... together... already. How powerful was it when a man stood before us on Thursday and shared the recent, tragic loss of his wife, then told us he felt her presence in the room when we sang Auld Lang Syne?

How powerful was it that same day when, after we had finished, Maxine – and I hope you don't mind me sharing this, doll – Maxine walked up to me with a tear in her eye and said, "You sang that song, and I thought of Bob. Do you remember Bob?"

Gentlemen, the Harmonizers are about to give the greatest gift of this Convention to thousands of people at once – to take them back to the people and moments that mean so much to them that they cannot contain their excitement, or their emotion, over going there... taking them to the place they want to *return* to the most. How extraordinary to be a part of that with you! To share love with family and - thousands of friends - through the manner of communication that we love most.

Gentlemen, I invite you to go today with the confidence, for this entire package, that we have done this... together... already. And, if I may quote from a familiar song, "And years from now, when we look back" on *this* day, I will be most thankful that I shared today with you. Thank you.



Family Fun at the Harmo-Picnic!

by Carole Mankin

Greetings! Thank you all for the wonderful support we had on the picnic. It really came together nicely and a good time was had by all. I had really hoped to get to visit with everyone a little more, but had to keep up with my 2 year old grandson Domenic.

A special thanks to Cathy Silva. She had a big bag of games that seemed bottomless. I think all of us kids enjoyed either watching or playing something. It's always a pleasure to plan something when the Harmonettes are involved. Many hands make for light work. Thank you for chipping in and helping wherever you could. The very special thing about making an event like this a success is team work. Also, just showing up means alot too. We had an terrific turnout.

The feedback that we received yesterday was.....we want to do this again! So, we are reserving the same location for next year. Also, while it is still fresh in everyone's mind, I'd like to do a "lessons learned" checklist....what worked, what didn't. So please email your suggestions and thoughts for making next year's event better to cwmankin@hotmail.com.

In other news, I know you have all be waiting with great anticipation about the new Harmonette name.....I'm afraid you'll have to wait just a bit longer.

First I'd like to thank all of those who took the time to submit an entry. The committee compiled the list and then brought the top selections to our July meeting. While we liked them, we just didn't find the one that we felt suited our organization. So we are back to the drawing broad and are asking once again for your ideas. You can either email me your suggestions or place them in our Harmonette Renaming Suggestion Box. We will take entries

Guests enjoyed all sorts of goodies at the picnic!



up through the end of the first week of September and vote at our September 9th meeting. Okay, so you want to know what happens if we pull the suggestions all together and we still can't decide. We have made a commitment to stay at the September meeting until we have a new name!

Some thoughts about our new name: we would like to stay away from anything that is vaguely similar to "Harmonette", so that pretty much eliminates anything with *Harmo* or *ette*. Also, we think that it should be something that reflects our role as a support group or auxiliary as opposed to a singing group. So put those thinking caps on and let those names flow forth.

Thanks.....Carole



The Harmonizers played hosts to some unexpected visitors at the picnic: extraterrestrials manifesting themselves as small spheres of multicolored plasma. These friendly aliens were greeted with open arms by the happy Harmonizers and they arrived (photo 1) and carried gently in special plasma holders (photo 2).

Some lucky earthlings were rewarded for their friendliness with Saturnian transparent anti-gravity hoop skirts (photo 3) or with telepathic powers over paper cups when kneeling (photo 4).

Don't miss the next Harmonizer event!

Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4





Remembrances of Montreal

by Joe Kane

This was my first experience on the International Stage (after attending 4 previous Internationals), and also my first time singing bass in anything other than a pick-up quartet, so these alone make Montreal stand out in my memory.

Some of the chorus highlights were the contest week coaching sessions, the togetherness breakfast, the rehearsal prep before stage time, and the few minutes backstage getting psyched and moving on the stage before the curtain opened – then everything is pretty much a blur.

On Thursday, the chorus's first rehearsals and coaching sessions, especially that with Greg Lyne, were demanding and electric, as we were prodded to sing better and "lighter". During Greg's session I could hear and feel the chorus sound changing and improving dramatically, particularly on All Aboard - a phenomenal experience. It was the best choral sound I'd ever participated in to that moment. We all knew the significance of what had happened, and on Friday morning we were really pumped. In Friday's sessions, we got even better – smoother, more resonant, and on Auld Lang Syne, more emotionally in sync that I'd ever sung before. The chorus sound was being massaged and driven and smoothed toward a masterful, rarified sweetness. I felt confident that we would do well.

With Saturday morning came the togetherness breakfast, and my wife and I arrived just on time – which in Harmonizer-land is late. After a long wait in the chow line chatting with many folks, we grabbed seats at table with Dick and Carol Dangel, Dave Welter, and Bob Ulibarri and his family. New fifth-place medallist college quartet Trade Secret, from Richmond, performed their wonderful set. The speeches and awards following were by turns moving and funny – among others, I laughed at Gary Bibens'

apparent powers of recall for the June retreat and Bob Sutton's disquisition on beavers. As a member of the class of 2003, I was proud of and amazed by Bill Aarhus' terrific remembrance of his Dad's participation in the Harmonizers and how this influenced Bill.

Later Saturday we moved downstairs to a different rehearsal room, low-ceilinged and cramped, and we struggled initially to regain Friday's tight, mellifluous sound. Gradually it came back to us, as we adjusted to the new space and humidity. We did spot-work under Terry's and Richard's guidance on both tunes, and then Richard gave us a pep talk, saying he had never been in front of such a great sound and that we were ready. Mark Klostermayer then took over with the logistical details, and we were told that the contest was running behind schedule. As one of the last contestants, our wait would be longer than anticipated.

After many episodes of the "hurry up and wait" that Mark promised us, at the hotel, in the busses, and through the Marriott, site of the warm-up room and picture taking session, we finally loaded onto busses again for our final trip to backstage at the Bell Centre. Here we waited in two long lines for our call, psyching up each other with "hot" eyes to bring our energy and focus to a peak. Then, as one line strode past the other and then Richard, silently shaking and slapping hands, we went on stage. In the blue stage light we heard from stage manager Ev Nau, and then briefly from Mark and Richard, and got a thumbs up from Greg Lyne. Soon we heard the announcers' call as we readied ourselves and took pitch. The curtain opened, and we were off, performing on stage at Internationals!

Coming off stage, I remember talking with John Hall and a few others about our performance. Pretty good, but not our best, was the consensus. Under the glare and pressure of the International stage lights, not all of our recent gains had come with us – to my ears, there was some sacrificing of vocal tone and beauty for power and volume, which may also have affected pitch, and a few sync issues. The audience had seemed appreciative, but not over-

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Montreal remembrances

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whelmed. I was hoping we had earned a bronze medal, but I wasn't sure of it. Coming into the arena and looking for my wife, the next chorus set started and so I sat down quickly next to Gary Plaa. He mentioned a report that we had sounded "shouty" at times. As Bob Sutton and Richard came over after that set for a pow-wow, I went off searching for my wife. Later during the call off, sitting at the back of the Harmo-block (we'd bought other seats before I'd become a Harmonizer) with my wife and Sam Brothers, I knew when the Alliance was called for a surprising fourth place medal that the Harmonizers would likely have to wait until Louisville for their next chorus medals. Afterwards I stood with the others in a classy Harmonizer tribute to the champion Vocal Majority and to the other medallists.

Sixth place was great, especially given the short time we had to work with Richard and the contest package, but after looking at the scores I felt sure that we could have been at least a 4th place chorus that day. Proving that and more is what the next year is all about!

This was my first year of international competition, but my fifth in attendance. During prior years I learned to avail myself of the many other pleasures of Internationals as a gathering place for many of the most talented and dedicated barbershoppers in the world. These pleasures include, first and foremost, pick-up quartetting. So most of my other great Montreal memories involved singing and tagging with some good and great singers – some famous, some not - at the Hilton, Sheraton, and Queen Elizabeth Hotels, and one night briefly in the Hideaway, on the nights leading up to and after the competition.

Between the quarterfinals sessions on Wednesday I caught up with my old Lewisburg chorus-mates Roger Tarpy and Ken Paulhamus (of the 2001

MAD district silver medallist quartet New Vintage). Roger's now in Richmond, singing in a fun quartet with Mike Wallen, and Ken's grown his own quartet, singing with his 3 sons in Acchording to Dad. Then I sang a few tags with my former State College quartet-mate, tenor Noah Morrison, who now sings with the district-qualifying quartet Mainline Chord Company and also with WHJ participant A Cappella Pops, and his buds Alan from Lancaster and Brett from Bryn Mawr.

Wednesday night after the quartet quarterfinals we went over to the Sheraton. Outside of the chorditorium, I saw three guys standing together, which is always my cue to offer to make it a quartet. They said sure, they needed a lead, so we launched into a few tags that rang like crazy. Between tags, I found out they were 3/4 of Midnight Watchmen, current LOL district champs. When their lead came over, I swapped to bass and we sang another tag, which rang even more. Wild! Then they were told they were next in line on the chorditorium stage and went off to run over what they'd sing. I wandered around a few minutes and heard another promising foursome, stopping to listen. One of the guys asked me to step in, and I said sure – and there I spent the next hour or so, ringing some of the best chords of the whole week. These guys were 3/4 of Crossfire, current PIO district champs. The bass and I were in the whole time, with me mostly on lead and occasionally bari, and we went through a bunch of tags and a song or two with various guys rotating in. I only left when my wife – to whom I'd given strict instructions to get me in bed by midnight to be fresh for the Harmonizer rehearsal the next morning – finally dragged me out of there around 12:30. On the way back to the hotel we met Chris Yates and a buddy of his from Cambridge. While we were talking, Neil Dingle, lead of MAD district finalists Crossroads, came over with his girlfriend and daughter, and with Neil on tenor and me on lead, we launched into a soft, sweet version of Heart of My Heart – getting a standing "O" from Neil's daughter, Shayla. A great way to end the evening!

Thursday after rehearsal I'd promised time to my wife, Lynn, to see a bit of

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Montreal remembrances

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old Montreal. We walked over in the afternoon and took in the sights, as well as a great dinner at a little French restaurant. Then we walked around in the shops, and finally over to the Place Jacques Cartier for a few well-earned beers under an outdoor canopy. Along the way I saw in passing a few Harmonizers – usually while I was waiting for Lynn to emerge some un-air-conditioned shop or other – such as Rob and Carol Nutt, Mark K., Dean Rust, and Troy Hillier. Deciding to make it an early night, we went back to the hotel, but since we had to go past the Hideaway to get to our room, we stopped in for “a minute”. Around midnight we finally emerged, after I’d sung a bit with Bob Caldwell, Dave Welter, George Azzam, Bede Bender, Doug Abt, Dick Dangel, and a few others, including our Montreal host, Pierre.

Friday afternoon following the MAD pep rally and before the quartet semifinals, I headed over to the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth. Ran into fellow Harmonizer Steve Matuszewski in a tagging group, and joined in. Steve hustled off to grab one with a few of the Wheelhouse guys, and I sang bass for a while, then swapped lead and bari lines on a couple of screamers with one of the college competitors who I’d also tagged with in Portland. Then I switched back to bass for a while. Steve M. came back and we tagged some more – fellow Harmonizer Chad Hoseth was also in a nearby group, and a few more, including Drew Fuller, passed by. After a while Raymond Davis came by and we sang a few more tags – passers-by were telling us there could hear us up in the mezzanine - before I took off to grab dinner and a shower before the quartet semifinals.

Friday after the semifinals, off I went tagging again, with wife Lynn along to make sure I got in at a decent hour. Went up to the Sheraton chordatorium area where I was hoping to run into some of the guys I’d tagged with on

Wednesday. Not as much luck this time, though I did manage a few tags with Harmonet correspondent Jade Walker and Reveille bass Mark Paul, among others, as well as with a mixed group of Brits. Since the chorus competition was the next day, when Lynn tugged on my shirt I made my early goodnights and headed to bed. On the way back we did run through the Fairmont and I said hi to Ev Nau (of Kenosha and Greendale), as well as Brian Beck of SEP.

Saturday night after the quartet finals and jamboree is usually an out-tagging-all-night affair, and this year was no different. Most of it is a blur, but a few highlights stick out. Started the night in the Sheraton, singing a few tags with Noah Morrison, Alan from Lancaster, and John from Easton, PA. Then after a beer or 2 and a little bit of wandering and watching, sang a few tags with double-gold medallist Paul Gilman and Alliance/MatriX lead Jeff ???. Ran into Steve M. and we rotated into a group from the Sound of the Rockies, including gold medallist Denny Malone. Then Steve and I hooked up with Neil Dingle and headed over to the Fairmont. In addition to tagging for a while with Neil and Steve, I sang with a number of young guys, including Rob Roman of 7th place college finalists 4-Be-We, some young guys from the VM, Hunterdon tag-meister Rich Taylor, and others. Finally, with most of the lobby cleared out, me, Steve, and two more young guys (including the son of a music judge, who listened in and offered chord analyses) worked in a few soft tags before my voice started giving out around 5:30 or so. Steve and I stopped at a Tim Horton’s on the way back to the hotel, where just before 6 AM we ran into Harmonizer Mike Schwartz and another guy outside, waiting for the airport shuttle. We did a couple of soft tags to close a chord-filled Internationals experience. Good morning ... and good night!



The Webcast Experience!

by Jack McKendree

We barbershoppers who stayed at home this year and watched the coverage which the Society provided by webcast had our own delights and thrills. It was like being there. No, it was an International Convention experience all our own!

Over 2000 separate connections at the same time were made on Saturday, July 5th. The Announcer, Rich Taylor, guessed that many webcast parties were being held, so the total audience was more like 10,000. About as many as actually attended in Montreal. Isn't that impressive? (Our Mike Everard was with family watching on a big screen TV set up by his son. Nancy and I watched in my study.)

I think I heard that, over the days Wednesday through Saturday, over 25,000 connects took place. Well, Nancy and I accounted for one connect at each of the sessions: Quartet Quarter Finals, Semi Finals, and Finals; Chorus Finals; College Contest; World Harmony Jamboree; AIC Show; and Jamboree (with Four Voices doing their swan song "All Rise"). Man, we were glued to the tube! We saw and heard more than most folks at the convention, and all for free!

We had not watched the webcast before because we had always been at convention. Now we had a chance to try it out. Our own Scott Hoge is Executive Producer and Brian Lynch is Associate Producer. They are a good team, with Scott as Mr. Inside and Brian as Mr. Outside. Outstanding narration was provided by Rich Taylor (the other Rick Taylor) and Phil Debar – both as volunteers. Here were some highlights from their efforts:

The scheduling of quartets for Semi-finals and Finals had to be done on short notice. We didn't want to miss the mike testers (our own Phat Cats).



Brian Lynch made sure, using the Harmonet, that it was all immediately posted (a big help). Performance times for choruses during competition were revised to accommodate traffic delays experienced by the chorus buses due to a major civic parade through the bus routes. Brian posted the new times to the Harmonet so that messages popped up on our screens in plenty of time. Rich and Phil announced them to the audience and kept up a line of memory recalls, current victories, and interviews so there was interesting stuff, not dull quiet time, between contest appearances. Greg Lyne and our own Chuck Hunter, Jr. were interviewed, for instance. We on the webcast knew as soon (maybe sooner) as anyone on site what was going on.

Brian tossed us little tidbits like: "By the way, have we mentioned that this year's convention recordings will be available on DVD? Yup! Details coming soon from Harmony Marketplace."

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Webcast experience

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Did I mention how good the singing was? It wasn't because of loyalty to the webcast that we stayed glued to the tube; it was powerfully moving presentations. Just let me mention that, during the Jamboree when we heard outgoing champ 4 Voices present "All Rise" (with accompaniment by the Voices of Lee Choir), there was a spontaneous standing ovation from the entire audience. I want to see next year's webcast just so I don't miss performances like this year's.

So many people signed on to the webcast on Wednesday and stayed all day that nearly a quarter of the Society's budget for the webcast was spent. (80% of the connections were at high bandwidth while they had planned for maybe 15% to 20%, the U.S. average). The team immediately re-planned to keep within budget. Thursday and Friday webcasts were set at medium bandwidth. Saturday would resume at high bandwidth. Brian (on the Harmonet) and Rich and Phil (on the webcast) began calling for donations. It took awhile for listeners to get involved.

Wednesday night the team posted the initial list of donors. I counted five Harmonizers (at home) who had given: Gaut (William), Durick, McKeever, Stueve, and McKendree. I was proud to see this early showing. That night, ACOUSTIX and MICHIGAN JAKE donated \$200 per quartet and challenged all registered quartets to do the same. A New Jersey Chapter issued a challenge for every active Chapter to donate \$100 (at least).

During the Saturday night Jamboree, Rich announced that over \$50,000 had been donated by credit card and more funds were expected to arrive in the mails by check. There was jubilation for the whole team. There will be money for next year's webcast at the very start, making it much more likely to happen!

Driven mad by overrehearsal, the class of 2003 spontaneously breaks into a mass "Electric Slide".



Forced to economize due to Montreal expenses, some members have explored alternates to pricey toupees.



The Chorus Contest

by Jerry Kindred

It's the greatest show on earth; well, in North America anyway. And the Harmonizers, for the fifteenth time, were part of it. Fifteen hundred sets of vocal chords were ready to entertain the crowd, which would swell to 12,000 before the end. Because of our place in the singing order, the contest chorus had to miss the entire thing. So, from my non-singing position in section 120, I can report my own impressions of the contest in Montreal. This is not an exhaustive report. For that, see Steve Tremper's report on the Harmonet. My goal is to give impressions from a Harmonizer point of view. This is strictly a personal report.

After a delay of about 30 minutes (apparently caused by a Montreal traffic jam), our friends from the Big Apple Chorus opened the show as mike testers. Under the direction of Joe Hunter with an unapologetic New Yawk attitude, they got things going with a twang.

The Middle Guys

The contest fell into three parts, like a hockey game. After all, the venue was the home of the Canadiens. First came the medium-sized competitors. The first chorus, the Midwest Vocal Express, earned a fifth place bronze right out of the blocks with a soldier set, "Gee, I Wish I Was Back in the Army" and "This Is the Army Mr. Jones." They beat us by thirty-one points, forty-six in presentation. Everybody likes a uniform, but that's ridiculous! They have come a long way in a short time, and they put on a great show. Curiously, the Great Northern Union followed their



fellow Land of Lakes partners. They did themselves proud, but there's a new force to be reckoned with in the LOL.

The Little Guys

After an adjustment in the riser configuration so the small choruses wouldn't look smaller, there was a group of eight more contestants. The old shibboleth about bigger is better was put to rest here as two of the medals came from this line-up. With 100 fewer men than the VM (that's 25 quartets), The Toronto Northern Lights again finished second. That's three silvers in a row. Are they going after Northbrook's record of eight in a row? They earned a solid 92.7 percent score with "It's Impossible." (One line was: "It's impossible to beat those guys from Dallas.") They also did "Song for the Little Guy." Good self-parody. They earned outstanding scores in all three categories. How do they get that sound out of 46 singers?

Also a medalist in this group was Dave Calland's buckeyes, The Alliance from Columbus. Their presentation scores in "South Rampart Street Parade" propelled them into a fourth place bronze. The Harmonet is abuzz with wonderment over their jump from fourteenth to fourth in one year. Congratulations to our friend Dave.

The Cambridge Chord Company from BABS with 51 men finished eleventh, to my knowledge the best showing yet by an affiliated chorus. They also had vociferous support from their seating section. The Union Jack has become a fixture at International. Bully.

Unfortunately, this small group also included the first of three performances in the contest of "Auld Lang Syne." This one was by Banks of Wabash from the Cardinal District; same arrangement as ours; and two choruses later, would you believe "All Aboard" by the MegaCity Chorus from Ontario? Since those were about the only repetitions in the contest, it seems a bit of bad luck that it happened to us. It had to take some of the impact out of our

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Chorus contest

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set when we sang the same two songs later in the contest.

The Big Guys

After another riser adjustment, The Vocal Majority showed why they are on a tier of their own. With 146 men they simply overpowered the space they were in. Their lows were lower, their highs higher and their sound was consistently pure. “Puttin’ on the Ritz” won the best scores in the contest for Presentation and Music and was bested only by their own ballad for Singing. Will Jim Clancy keep going? Next question.

Jim Henry has been slowly advancing up the leader board. This year he lands in third place. Just about everyone’s favorite song in the contest was “Just a Kid Named Joe,” which won Dallas-like scores for Presentation. Good thirties-era outfits, too. Watch out for these guys next year.

Finally, after eighteen choruses—about fifteen of which would have won a medal ten years ago—came the boys from MAD. From my vantage point, the Harmonizers clicked on both songs. Critics say we didn’t emote in the ballad and the tempo of the up tune was too slow. All I can say is we must be doing something right. To finish sixth in that company should make anybody proud. Only a few details kept us out of a medal, and some incredible performances by our competitors. I’m looking forward to Louisville. Already reserved our tickets.

A parting shot: The last time the Harmonizers finished sixth at International their next appearance resulted in . . . a gold medal. Hmmm. . . .

Barbershop Cruising with Power Play and Riptide!

by Ross Johnson

Ross and Susan Johnson, Alan and Patty Wile, and Ross’s brother and sister-in-law Terry and Chris Johnson from the Santa Rosa, California, chapter followed the Montreal 2003 International Contest with a cruise up the Saint Lawrence Seaway. They, along with 76 other barbershopper family members, were thrilled to be serenaded daily by Power Play, the 2003 International Quartet Champions Jack, Mark, Mike, and Don Slamka. They all took a bus to Quebec City and boarded the Holland America line’s M.S. Rotterdam.

Stops along the way included Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; Sydney and Halifax, Nova Scotia; Bar Harbor, Maine; and Boston. While walking back to the ship at Charlottetown, Ross heard his name being called out. When he turned around, it was Rob and Carole Nutt who were coincidentally visiting Prince Edward Island.

But guess what? The two Johnson families are cruising again in February 2004, with a few more Harmonizer Family couples. These couples include Bede and Mary Kay Bender, Rick and Susan Taylor, and Richard and Chris Lewellen, along with the rest of the International Medalist Quartet Riptide. They plan to arrive in Honolulu a day early to party with the Aloha Barbershop Chapter and then board the Norwegian Star. They will visit

Hilo, Hawaii;
Fanning Island, Kiribati;
Kahului, Maui;
Nawiliwili, Kauai;
and return from Honolulu.



Cracking the "Top 21"

by Steve White

Obviously, making the first cut into the Top-20 is the goal of nearly every quartet competing in an International Contest, but how do you handle 21st place ... mic-testers? Would 22nd have been better? Some have said the only good thing about being mic-testers is that you are the only quartet in the contest who actually knows your placement before the scoring sheets are printed – not much of a consolation.

For *Phat Cats*, our 21st place finish in Montreal was a marked improvement over our Portland finish of 28th. We joked that if we continue to improve by 7 places each year, we should wrap up the championship by 2006. Yeah, right! But missing the first cut this year by just 6 points (2 songs, 15 judges ... you do the math) was a little, shall we say, unfulfilling.

But now as International Mic-Testers, we had an important role to play in the contest, especially since *Power Play* (later crowned International Quartet Champions) was first to perform after us in the Semifinal round. So, what do we do? How to approach this obligation? Was the contest pressure off of us? Would we sing better than we did in the quarterfinals?

While we were no longer singing for placement, our pride was on still the line. Deep down, all mic-testers want to show the judges that they made a terrible error in judgment (in our case, 0.4 points per judge – yes, we did the math). Should we sing to "show 'em" or just perform like it's a chapter show?

Being rather parochial and somewhat fearful and upsetting the contest gods, we did not want to break any Society rules, traditions, or expectations; so, we wanted to abide by the rules, keep it barbershop, and not do anything wild and crazy. In contrast to this, *Freestyle* (the mic-testers for the Final

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Despite appearances, Phat Cats (top) and Riptide (bottom) do not, in fact, shop together.





Top 21

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round) demolished every rule in the book when they presented a hilarious routine that included walk-ons by **FRED, Four Voices, Jeff Oxley**, and others in a collective mic-testing effort that will be remember for quite a while. Sure wish we had thought of it.

So what did **Phat Cats** decide to do? Actually, the pressure was off a bit and we were able to let loose and have some fun while performing in front of (Gulp!) 12,000 people, if that is possible. Had we made the first cut, we would have sung our prepared contest set. However, we had a somewhat private opportunity that was too good to pass up. In our show repertoire was a song that Scott's dad, **Bob Disney**, wrote, arranged, and sang in **The B&O Connection** which earned earn a 3rd Place medal nearly 25 years ago. With Bob listening to the Internet web cast from Florida, we swapped out one song and surprised him by singing "**Ride the Railroad, Tonight**" – a small tribute to a charismatic singer/songwriter and a terrific M-AD quartet.

Well, we don't know if we "showed 'em," but we sure did have a good time, and maybe even sang a little better than we would have were we actually competing in the second round. Still, we'd rather have cracked the Top-20. Sooooo, back to work with renewed hopes of getting another shot at it next summer in Louisville.

- **Phat Cats (Scott, Mike, Ed, and Steve)**

The Echo staff contacted Freestyle to see whether they might have a word of advice for their fellow mic testers. Their advice? DON'T improve....!

Dear Phat Cats,

We applaud you for striving to improve. But let us offer a little different perspective. What's wrong with mic testing? It's worked for us and has actually been a pretty decent career. Sure, it would be fun to be in the top 20 or even the top 10, but let me just inspeculiarate myself for a minute.

There were only 2 legitimate mic testers this year and 41 "other" quartets. Now when I do the math, I've got Phat Cats in second. We've had a good run and have enjoyed representing this fine society as the Two Time International Gold Medal 1st Place Champion Mic Testers...but we're tired....and old.....we've had our time in the spotlight and frankly, it's tough to maintain that level of testiness. We have been looking for someone to take our place as mic testers for the finals and we feel that Phat Cats has the right stuff. We noticed your last minute repertwah.....repeatwaw.....song change when you decided to do Mr. Disney's "Railroad". It's that kind of inspeculiaration...ism that we are looking for in our replacement as I.G.M.1st.P.C.M.T. Whatever you decide, we wish you luck.

Congrats on your "Silver",
**Andy, Rich, Todd and Bruce
Freestyle**

*Next Issue: Selling the Harmonizers!
Meanwhile, have YOU emailed the Echo your contribution for the "Weirdness of Barbershop Issue"?*



Sixth Place History!

by John Hohl, Director Emeritus

Tuesday night, July 15, we were hearing some details and feedback about the Harmonizer sixth place finish at the International Chorus Contest in Montreal. It dawned on me later that same Tuesday night after directing the chorus in “Keep the Whole World Singing,” that it was exactly 20 years ago I directed the sixth place International Chorus Champs and here we are... sixth place again.

That contest in 1983, 20 years ago was in Seattle and we sang “Wait Til You Get Them Up In The Air Boys” and “Somebody Stole My Gal Medley.” Those were very difficult times for the chorus. We had won the District Championship 6 times before and gained the honor to represent Mid-Atlantic at the International Contest, and had even been in the medals but not yet won the gold. In fact, we had just come off still a 3rd place bronze international win under my direction the previous year in Pittsburgh.

There was a big lesson learned that year as we awaited the announcement of chorus rankings. The Dukes of Scarborough were announced as 2nd and many thought the Harmonizers had won and started to cheer. Surely we would medal but we hadn't been called. It was only when the Phoenicians were announced as champs did the reality set in that we were out of the medals entirely. It was a hard fought and very tight contest with Alexandria at 6th place, only 76 points behind the winning chorus.

The preparation each year was taking more and more of a toll emotionally, eroding morale, stress with our families, and a financial burden. How much “sacrifice” could one commit was the common question. And...what would it take to win the Gold?

Well the players and leaders changed over the years and eventually Alexan-



dria heard those magic words in 1986, in first place...the Alexandria Harmonizers. Once again the players have changed. Everyone faces a bigger challenge to help the chorus regain its medal and champ status. It gets more and more difficult each year as every man on the riser knows, but the four-time gold medal Harmonizers that we know today grew out of that 6th place finish, so I know it can be done again!

But for me, it still and always is a thrill to direct the Alexandria Harmonizers!

Note: Many details of this recounting are from the written history of the Alexandria Harmonizers 1948-1998 “Breathless Moments” lovingly edited by John Hanna, Gary Smith and Wilbur Sparks.



Montréal Results and Beyond

by Bob Sutton, Vice President, Music and Performance

A few months back I wrote for the Echo of our goals for the International this year:

- A marked improvement in the basic singing skills of the chorus
- A demonstrated capacity to evoke passion in the audience through voice color
- Significant execution of word sound connectors
- Absolute passion in performance

It should be pretty clear that an independent appraisal of our performance would say that we achieved a mixed result. To the point, we showed ourselves through our preparation for the Saturday contest session to be quite capable of all four items – our basic singing skills are certainly improving, at least in the sense of performing in a more pleasing tone. Our dipping our toes into the pond of voice expression – sandpaper, rabbit fur, wells, barrels, etc., affected those who heard us do it. We began to make note of connectors (although the grunt work on that was a post-Montréal effort. And our own performances were clearly marked by the passion our singers have always been able to muster.

As has been shared, the judging comments (aside from the compliments) are pretty clearly coming back with singing issues – sectional unity, prominent individual voices, some tendency to raucousness, synchronization issues. These are all things *characteristic of a chorus in the throes of a new program*, unsure as individuals on the contest stage exactly what skills to fall back on when the pitch is blown. They reflect a chorus that had limited time with its ballad (four months) and less than a month with the total visual plan on the up-tune. Would we like to have medaled? Of course! Were we correct to have prepared as though we were trying to win? Of

course! Did we learn a lot about what happens on the contest stage when the plan is in its infancy? Well, I sure did!

So where does that leave us as we return to do battle in the “on-to-Louisville” era? More to the point, what did we actually do in Montréal to earn a sixth-place standing?

We need to distinguish between two large areas of analysis. The first is those areas dealing with our capacity to perform – what did we learn to do; that is, had we done a performance at 100% of our capability that day, what would that performance have looked and sounded like? Secondly, what did we not bring on stage with us – did we perform at 80% of our capacity and, if so, why?

Retention on stage

Let’s look at the second part, because it is frankly the job of the Music Team to ensure that we prepare the chorus to do its best on stage. I believe it is fair to say that we had a markedly lower transference this year than we typically do. That is, we left more in the rehearsals than we usually do. But that is itself very reflective of the nature of a new program. In past years, the main difference between any international set and its predecessors had been the songs themselves. Our techniques were generally consistent from year to year; for the most part only the material used to exhibit those techniques changed. When we hit the stage under “battle conditions” in past years, we defaulted back to a similar performance level to our rehearsals; hence our internationals often were peak performances for the Harmonizer chorus.

I would contend that that is one of the least anticipated results of the very significant changes to the singing approach of the Harmonizers – our contest transference was less in 2003 because six months simply is nowhere near enough to establish that “default capability” at a high enough level. Many of the pit’s comments that have come back have had the qualifier “for

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the short time Richard has been there ...". I believe we correctly realized and anticipated the effects of the short time *having the songs themselves* (and the choreography) on such singing attributes as balance and synchronization; there were comparable impacts of the short time having the new program itself.

Level of achievement

I would equally share, however, that remarkable progress was made by the chorus in the first six months of the new singing program. What we were *capable of* in rehearsal, and exhibited there frequently, was truly excellent. What it *will* take is the one thing we did not have the luxury of – time. How excited did our Tuesday audiences get when we even fooled around with sandpaper and rabbit fur? These, as well as diligent application of the connectors, are new toys for our Director to play with, you know, and the toy box has a lot more in it than that. Of course, those are more effective when they are part of the song's plan! With many more months lead time, we will learn, as we learn a song – not later – where those vocal textures go, as surely as we learn the notes, words and steps.

Our best is substantial and improving. As it becomes ingrained, it will be a more frequent visitor in our performances. That will come, gentlemen, as our number of performances increases. It will come with our Wildwood 2003 chorus committed to doing what is needed on stage in District. It will come with our Fall show and with every show from now to Louisville.

One Chorus

One of the very first steps toward that end is that we are, effective 1 September, the Harmonizer chorus. Not a performing and a contest chorus, but one chorus. A singer qualifies for the chorus through his section leader, by submitting a tape from the risers that demonstrates his capacity to sing with good, *contributing* intonation and vocal quality in a reasonable sec-

tion of range, and has passed an equivalent *visual* qualification, much as has been done to date. When he is in, he is in.

Now "in" may mean he is constrained to a one-octave range and will have to work out a plan for each song with his section/squad leader that keeps him in that range, but if he is contributing and not detracting, through his voice quality and tuning, that's it – as long as he keeps to his plan. "In" will mean that a few gentlemen will be asked to change parts to one where their intonation and vocal abilities contribute more. "In" also means that he is expected to *contribute* visually, adding to the net effect rather than simply not detracting from it.

After September 1, *only* members of the Harmonizer chorus, and singing guests, will be permitted on the risers at rehearsals.

Contest is a performance. People will be members of the Harmonizer chorus who choose only to compete, while others will choose to do shows and *not* compete. The Harmonizer chorus includes both. Neither is an issue; we respect the individual needs and desires of all chorus members.

Wildwood

That said, Wildwood is coming. We will take the same package as we did in Montréal, and we encourage those who could not go to international to re-join us now on the risers for District. Candidly, we finished sixth this year, but because of the recognition of our new program, no one is running around saying we're history. But if we come back to Wildwood with 125 or so singers, and put up a score in the top couple of District choruses, then Montréal becomes the distant past, and we regain the ability to strike fear. I'm for striking fear. If you didn't make it to Montréal, let's see you on Tuesday. We have typically – maybe always – had a smaller chorus at District than international. This is the year to reverse that.



From the First Hello...



This past month after Montreal, we said good-bye to one of our newest members, recent college grad Dave Geunther.

More accurately, we said so-long; in the the following farewell note from Dave, he promised to return to the Hamonizers at some point!

I had an amazing time this weekend with all of you. I just can't muster up the correct words for the positive energy and love I have received from everyone. The past 4 or so months have just been a speedy blur to me. I knew the day that I had to leave was coming, but I never planned on actually dealing with it so soon.

As you probably know I am starting a new job down in Ft. Eustis very shortly, and will be leaving for my new home on Monday the 7th (Today). I am excited about the future that lies ahead, however I am also pained by the feelings of missing all those I care for, like my family and best friends. Harmonizers, you are no different from these people. You have all given so much to me in so many ways. I just can't thank you all enough.

I want you all to know that I'll be missing you every night startng now, until I can join you on the risers again; I WILL join you on the risers again even if it takes a while. Keep me posted on shows and upcoming events, because I may be in the area visiting parents once in a while.

As I move around the next few years, I am planning on singing as much as possible in every style I can (barbershop, jazz - my first training, or whatever else). I heard about a few a capella groups at William and Mary College as well as a decent barbershop chorus in Norfolk. I plan to check them all out as soon as possible!

Farewell Brothers,

Dave



...to the Last Goodbye

by Myles Terrence Reynolds

I am sure that many of you have already heard of my father, Myles H. Reynolds' recent death and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for being such an inspiration and an absolute joy in my dad's life.

I have been lucky enough (throughout my life) to be able to share many parts of his "Barbershop Experience" with the Harmonizers, the NovaChords, the Sweet Adelines and people like Ken Zigfield, Oz Newgard, Chris and Jeanette Morrow and so many more. As a kid, I remember helping to paint show scenery in a warehouse on Cameron Street. The shows, the Spring tonics, the meetings and the comradery were so much more than just great memories for me, but were even more than that to my father. The Harmonizers were always a true brotherhood to him.

Now it's my job, to ask you to carry on the tradition that he so greatly honored and respected. Keep up the spirit and go for the win in Canada!

As you may already know, my father's memorial service will be Wednesday July 9th, at 11am, at St.Lukes Episcopal Church. It was my dad's fond wish that the Harmonizers be invited and would sing for him. I would be personally honored, as well, by any and all who wish to attend.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for carrying on the tradition has always brought a smile to my dad's face.

Harmonizer Myles H. Reynolds, a former National Airport traffic controller and retired Federal Aviation Administration employee who had lived in the Washington area since 1947, died of emphysema June 28 at the Oak Meadow Nursing Home in Alexandria. Myles, who lived in Alexandria, was born in Swansea, Mass. After service in the Army Air Forces during World War II, he became a civilian air traffic controller in Toledo. He was an air traffic controller at National from 1947 to 1956. He retired in 1981 from FAA headquarters, where he worked in air traffic control management.

He had been a member of the Alexandria Harmonizers international champion barbershop chorus since 1961. He was a member of the Bass section, and a Board Member at Large in 67/68, 71/72 and 86/87. He was always willing to lend a hand and give of his talents whenever the chapter needed something, like building a stage prop, driving the truck or just being a Harmonizer. In 1982, he was given the Harmonizer Honor Award for service above and beyond and in 1994 was given the Harmonizers' highest honor, the Harmonizer Memorial Award for outstanding service to the chapter during his entire membership.

He also had been a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, the Air Traffic Control Association and the Society of Airway Pioneers. He was a past president of Wellington Civic Association of Fairfax County.