



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS

HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT



Volume 10 # 4

GNUsNews

June 2005

2005 Day at the Dome



Excitement filled the Minneapolis **Hubert Humphrey Metrodome** even before the game between the Minnesota Twins and Toronto Bluejays on Wednesday, May 18, 2005. as over 350 men were thrilled at the opportunity to sing the national anthems of both Canada and USA. 12 different barbershop choruses along with the Luther College choir were represented. There was even a special T-shirt for the event. (Do you get one for yourself?)

We were pleased that retired Twins legend **Tony Oliva** (pictured above with GNU director **Pete Benson**) came to visit us during rehearsal. He got on the bullhorn to greet us, then posed for a few photos. He really made our day as we were up close and personal with somebody famous.

The whole experience went by rather quickly but once again the Great Northern Union experienced not only the high of being on the playing field; but we also had the pleasure of seeing the pride in the many men outside of our chapter as they sang with us. Thank you, fellow barbershoppers. We hope to sing with you again!

An added bonus was reduced price tickets, which enticed us to bring our families for a fun night at the **domed** ballpark! (It would have been a washout from the downpours, if not for the roof over our heads!) Hot dogs all around, peanuts, cotton candy, and "ballpark beverages" of all kinds, were enjoyed as we watched the Twins beat Toronto by one valued run.

A big thank you to GNU Marketing Manager, **Loring Harrop**, and his team, for their uncounted volunteer hours while they coordinated this totally successful event!

More Dome pictures on page 10

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Oh Yeah! The Train's a Comin'

Just in case you've forgotten, there are at least 8 choruses trying to fight there way into 5 medalist spots. Simply performing "the usual" GNU clean sound and conservative style will not get us in. Don't get me wrong, our sound is great and we have been improving all year, but then again, so has everyone else. Nobody is going to play dead and let us pass them; we must reach out and TAKE it. It won't happen by accident. How do we do it?



As I stated in rehearsal a few weeks ago, we know what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. We have all of the fundamental tools we need for a winning performance at our disposal. We can all sing in tune, sing in The Model, turn diphthongs, inflect the meaning of the text, activate our faces and bodies, etc. etc. Right? The only variable elements are attitude and total engagement. I'm talking about Super-hyper-elevated total engagement. You know, all light bulbs illuminated. Without that, the performance is clean, pretty, and sterile. With it, it's magic!



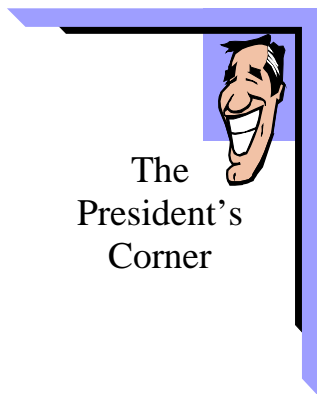
In the past, we have saved most of the "total hyper-engagement" for the contest warm-up room. What's really exciting is that this year we seem to be hitting it more often in our regular rehearsals! The "On to Fame" show had more of it than I remember from past years too. What's different? Ask yourself what you are doing personally to make sure you are in that elevated state every time you sing? Remember, YOU are the most important bulb in the marquis. Now let's go light up the stage in Salt Lake City!!

Thanks.
PETE



Guys,

We all belong to BHS because of the music. However, there are a number of bonuses which are available to us. One is the nature of the bonds we form with our fellow members. In some ways, we are like family. Thus you have heard references to each other as "brothers." In fact, the Easton, PA chapter chose "Brothers in Harmony" as its chorus name. These bonds are based on our love of music, especially 4-part men's a cappella singing, our motivation steadily to improve the level of performance, both as individuals and as a group, and our intent to share our art with as many audiences as possible.



Yet we are a very diverse group. We differ from each other in a number of important ways, yet are largely unaware of those differences, because they do not matter. Try this exercise - get out a copy of the chapter roster, and as you read each name, ask yourself at least the following questions about each member: "What is

his career, profession, and work history?" "Is he single, married, divorced, widowed?" "Any of these more than once?" "What church does he attend?" "What are his political views?" "What is his educational level, and where did he go to school?" etc., etc., etc.

I suspect that most answers will be "I don't know!" But it doesn't matter, since all those are irrelevant. We check all those aspects of ourselves at the door when we arrive on Thursday nights. If we didn't, or couldn't, most of our success as a group, and the positive consequences we get from belonging, would disappear.

Bill Lydecker – GNU President



2005 Convention webcasts

The rapid growth in listenership for the webcasts since Kansas City 2000, combined with constantly improving technology and dropping costs for streaming bandwidth have made it possible for the Society to deliver a very high-quality experience at a fair price.

This year, you can listen and see the contests from home, without interruptions for fund-raising appeals to support high-bandwidth video. Under the new pay-per-view model, everyone can get the experience he desires at a reasonable price.



Try before you buy: to ensure your connection and computer can support the experience you purchase, we will have four test streams that you can check out prior to your purchase. Each one will give you a five-minute stream that will allow you to test your Media Player, your bandwidth delivery and then let you decide which stream meets your individual quality standards.

Use your credit card to order online, and choose among these options:

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Grateful? Want to donate more? We'll let you do that, too!

Better convention coverage

Veteran announcer Phil DeBar will again be your webcast anchorman. He'll be joined by a variety of guest announcers for every broadcast: top singers, coaches, directors, and more. He'll be supported on the webcast team by Producer/Director Scott Wetle, a veteran of our convention video productions in the past, and by the streaming services of Riverbend Media, who provided our high-quality webcast in Louisville 2004.

The complete lineup of all the events to be webcast is still being finalized – look for details soon at www.barbershop.org/saltlake.

Spread the word – the 2005 webcasts will be the biggest and best yet!

From the Judges Pit

The Great Northern Union is very fortunate to count 9 judges among our members. Through this column, we will get advice from these experts on how to improve our individual performance.



I learned something 10 years ago. I learned it at a GNU rehearsal. I don't even remember which rehearsal, but it changed my life. What was it? Read on.

I started barbershopping in 1978. For the first 15 years or so of my barbershopping career, most people would say I was pretty successful. I sang in a chorus that medaled at International several times. I won the LOL District quartet championship the first time out. My quartet qualified for International the first time we tried. That same quartet sang at International at 10 of the next 11 years. I was one of four founders of a chorus that has clearly been one of the best in the Society for nearly 20 years. All in all, most people would say that was a pretty great record.



But some time about ten years ago it dawned on me that my real joy came, not from the honors, but from the personal fulfillment and growth that came from working hard and getting better. So one night, at a GNU rehearsal, I decided it was time to stretch myself even further.

My new goal was not to reach a higher honor. It was not a goal for my group. It was to push myself personally to be as good as I could be. If honors came with that, so much the better. But they weren't the goal. My own personal growth was the goal.

The first thing I did that night was to decide that others weren't my problem, and they couldn't prevent me from achieving my own personal goal. That meant I gave up being frustrated at those other guys as being the source of my lack of achievement.

The second thing I did that night was to decide that I really was capable of working flat out hard for an entire evening. Not 50%, not 75%, not even 90%. The entire evening. In one respect, doing this was a monumental challenge, as I had developed a habit of slacking off or daydreaming every now and then, just like a lot of guys

do. In another respect, though, (and this was my discovery) I found that the time I wasn't slacking off was the most rewarding time of the evening. When I was working hard there was an energy inside me that I didn't feel at other times. And that energy was exciting! As I set my mind to the 100% goal, I feared I wouldn't be able to do it. I would tire out too soon. My voice wouldn't last the entire evening. And that was true for a while. But pretty soon I discovered that 100% was something I could really get used to. The only thing holding me back was not my endurance or my voice. It was my attitude and my old habits.

Well, since that wonderful night 10 years ago, I haven't looked back. Yes, I have occasionally caught myself in momentary lapses. And yes, I occasionally do things on the risers that distract others. But over these most recent 10 years I have found that 100% is now my habit, not just my goal.

In the 10 years since that night, I have had some high accomplishments and some low moments. But what has kept me going isn't the accomplishments. It is the sheer enjoyment of working hard and improving myself along the way. And my truly magical moments have been when all the guys around me were doing the same.

I still get tired and sometimes I even have to sit down. But I never lose engagement in the moment. The 100% level is truly exhilarating. And I've discovered that I really am capable of 3 hours of exhilaration.

Each of you is a different person. None of you is just like me. But I'd like to suggest that you try the 100% plan and see how it works for you.

Take the next couple chorus rehearsals (or quartet rehearsals if you're in a quartet) and push yourself to be 100% engaged for three hours. That doesn't mean you can't or won't make mistakes during that period. But make them mistakes of overdoing not mistakes of lack of focus. When you personally aren't being asked to do anything (say Pete is working with another section), find something you can stay engaged on. Maybe Pete's direction will help you, too, even though it's not directed at you. Or practice your own part silently while the other guys are singing theirs. But stay focused the entire evening. 100%.

If you're at all like me, you'll find that you will actually have more energy at the end of the rehearsal than you had at the beginning. And you'll inevitably feel really good about your evening.

As Robert Frost said in one of his famous poems, "I chose the road less traveled, and that has made all the difference." Pick your road carefully.

Jim Emery

“On To Fame” Show

Great Northern Union shared the stage this year with some awesome Sweet Adelines in the **City of Lakes** chorus (pictured below). They brought along their star quartet **"ICE"**, who placed 16th last year at their International. Additionally, we were joined by our own **"QUEST"** quartet, who have jetted to stardom within LOL District in less than a year and a half. Together, the four groups wowed the audience by their energy and musicality. We took individual and collective pride in our excellence; and had fun performing for our friends and family before we head off to International in Salt Lake City for the first week in July.

Folks came from far and wide, some for repeat attendance at our concerts. A lady from Rochester was very interested in meeting Bob Cannella who has capably and congenially processed her ticket purchases for years! Previous members, with a renewed appetite for potential future performance with us, came with their families, some, who by the way, look like potential members themselves!

Neighbors, relatives, teachers, and friends alike were impressed and entertained all evening. Some random comments overheard: "What is that MC's name, again???" He is soooo good!" Also, "Are all those guys having as much fun as it looks like?" Later "totally awesome" was heard. And on it went, with accolades until the lobby was finally empty. Folks were walking to their cars enjoying the cool summer breeze, and re-living with their companions, the high points of the concert.

Some folks have told friends living near either side of the Minnesota-Iowa border to get their tickets early for the Fairmont show in September as it is likely-to-be sold-out. Others are already counting up how many tickets they will need for the November show at Bethel. Still others are looking forward to a college event again in the spring. So our work is cut out for us; and oh my, oh my, are we going to have fun doing it!



Pictured above is **ICE!**
 Immediately below is our MC, Judd Orff.
 And at the bottom of the page,
 The Great Northern Union in action.



How we sell GNU products

A 3 part series on marketing the Great Northern Union

Recordings

Most of you now know that we sell recordings online in addition to concerts.

You might not know who handles the actual sale. Here's the scoop, and it's generally worth reading, so you know how we compliment



your dues with chorus revenues: A-cappella.com is probably the world's single largest distributor of a cappella (and nearly a cappella) recordings. They sell GNU CDs to people who just visit their web site and to those we send there via a link from our chorus page.

"But why don't you refer people to Harmony Marketplace?", you ask. It's all economics. A-cappella.com pays GNU a lot more for direct referrals . . . about \$5/CD more, in fact. We have also provided CDs to Harmony Marketplace and plan to advertise the listing in an upcoming Harmonizer, however. In addition to the Barbershop Harmony Society, GNU is a member of CASA (Contemporary A Cappella Society of America)

. While we work hard to promote the barbershop art form through concerts and events like our Day at the Dome, designed to help GNU and brother chapters introduce barbershop harmony to new singers, we also want to promote our "other side" - that part of GNU that's always experimenting and pushing the envelope of vocal music. By promoting the wider world of a cappella, we bring contemporary a cappella fans a chance to hear barbershop and vice versa. Most people who like, for example Doo Wop or vocal jazz, also enjoy barbershop. Working with organizations like CASA/A-cappella.com helps to spread the word.

For a fun tour of a cappella, including a brief description of the different 'flavors' of vocal music, consider visiting a-cappella.com online and explore their different features. In one organization, they feature recording distribution (a-cappella.com), a vocal music society that parallels SPEBSQSA (CASA, of which we're a member chorus) and the ICCA, or Inter Collegiate Championship of A cappella. GNU has even been invited to host a division contest for the ICCA - an opportunity to get to know college singers better and let them get to know us.

Loring Harrop
Marketing Vice President

Another marketing opportunity done well

By Loring Harrop ,GNU Marketing V.P.

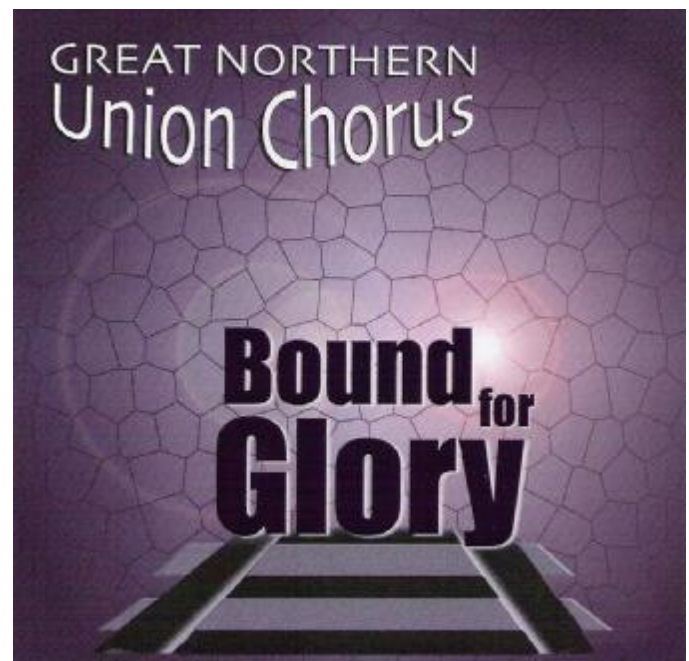
GNU member, **Bob Griffith**, helps to produce an independent TV show directed primarily at seniors out of a Bloomington public access studio. The show's official title is **Time of Our Lives** and is aired on local Twin Cities cable stations. Their latest episode focuses on creative outlets of some of their members. Bob chose to have the Great



Northern Union featured and arranged the broadcast of our Montreal contest set and an interview with **Jim Higgins** (GNU past president).

All went very well and for a special treat, if you tune in, you'll get to see Bob playing piano and singing to start off the show. The official broadcast schedule has not been determined as yet but hopefully Bob will let us know when it will be aired.

It's a nice PR grab, and very thoughtful of Bob.



Duluth Retreat 2005

What a line up at Duluth on the weekend after Mother's Day! A marathon rehearsal with over 13 hours of riser time. That is over 4 normal rehearsals, guys! It went by fast though because we had the best coaches in the country working with us. Rosemary and Bob Calderone on stage presence, along with Mark Hale on the singing category kept us engaged and thinking about how we could make our performance package better for Salt Lake.

Who can forget Rosemary's "Boom-chicka-Boom" exercise? Right there, we got ourselves some presentation pointers. She told us "Stick out! Everybody stick out!" In other words, emote the meaning of each segment of each song to the "nth" degree.



The Calderones also said that there are "fantastic subtle moves" in our ballads ... adding "it is amazing how one little movement makes a big difference" ... "do not settle for just OK ... settle for 1,000%". Rosemary said that our goals will be achieved **now**, at rehearsals, not at contest. "Remember also," she said, "use body language, not body mechanics." Do these things every time you perform the song... at every rehearsal, not just in performances. (when have we heard that before??). Remember also the Marquee analogy? Rosemary says that we want all of our lights shining brightly on the Marquee. You do not want to be the one light bulb out.

Marty thanked us for a huge turnout, stating that it shows the GNU commitment to perfection. He also reminded us that Pete HAS delivered; now it is up to us.

Jim Emery is following up on his



Duluth promise to help each member to visualize the entire performance each day between now and contest. Are you doing this?

Mark asked us to be an asset to the chorus, and not a liability. Do not subtract points. Eyebrows up might be a liability; do not be a "deer in the headlights". To explain further he said "constantly ripple and wave the face according to what the lyrics call for".



Roger Stanfield summed things up by asking each member to not rely on others for our choreo. One fourth second behind is not acceptable. Remember also that the first move in the ballad is the breath; every man must remember this.

And so it went... more and more tips. Expert after expert giving us his and her all, that we might shine. The first goal, of course, is the "On To Fame" for our hometown audience; then "On To Salt Lake" to claim our place in that outstanding auditorium while we "shine our Marquee lights" for the best of our peers.



Remember the little inside joke: Stanfield wants his medal! It's all about him! Or is it all about **you** too?

More Duluth pictures on page 8

More
Duluth
Pictures



Meet Steve Aldrich



Members: Get to know "em

Steve Aldrich, a member of Bloomington chapter and non-singing member of GNU, has a very long and interesting biography. The following are some of what he shared with us:

He has been married to Myrna for 40+ years. He is the father of GNU front row member Jeff

Aldrich (Elizabeth) and currently non-singing member, David Bailey-Aldrich (Angela). Steve is the grandfather of Emma, 6 and Max, 4. Steve also has a foster son, Shuwn McDearmon, 25, who lives in downtown Minneapolis. Steve and Myrna live on Nicollet Island.

"I went to Union Seminary, thinking I might be called to the ministry, attracted to it by the opportunities for counseling, creating social justice, and being on stage as teacher and leader. I [later] began to see the power of words as they expressed law and public policy and how people's lives were changed, sometimes for the worse, by the power of the words behind government actions." He is a lawyer, and currently Judge of Hennepin County District Court: Family, Civil, and Criminal Divisions.



In Steve's words, "The themes that fill my life and from which I draw pleasure and meaning include family, music, athletics, church, and social and community action."

Musically, Steve took piano and violin lessons; played string bass in junior high orchestra. He sang junior high operettas, and played Lord Tolloler in *Iolanthe* at Grinnell College, as well as high school men's and mixed choruses at Washburn. He was in an a capella quartet (Bari) in NYC while in Seminary, Collegium Musicum in Wash. DC, 1966-7. Additionally, he sang with church choirs in Minneapolis, at 1st Congregational and later Mayflower Community UCC, 1969 through the early 1990's.

Meet Dan Vander Ploeg

Oakdale is home for Anita and Dan Vander Ploeg. Although in the past dozen years, they have lived and worked in Oak Brook, IL; Lincoln NE, Bethlehem, PA; Fairmont, MN; and now in Alexandria, MN. They have three kids, all married, and seven grandchildren: living in Portland, Oregon; Warren, Pennsylvania; and Dusseldorf, Germany.

Dan is completing his 43rd year as an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. He is known in national church circles as a teacher and an advocate for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues, and for helping the church become a place of welcome for all.



He was a barbershopper for one year during the 50's at the Manitowoc, Wisconsin chapter (home of the famous and well loved 1951 International Quartet - the **Schmitt Brothers**). Dan did not join again until 1981, and has been a member ever since. He has sung with the **Singing Buckeyes, Minneapolis Commodores, The Lincoln Continentals**, and the **Brothers in Harmony** of Easton, PA. Dan joined GNU in 1988.

Dan came to barbershopping with a rich music background. He was a music major for two years in college, playing French horn and Baritone horn. He was bass in a college quartet, called the "**Dis-cords**". "Our highlight was a 60-day concert tour in the summer of 1957: 58 programs in churches. We traveled from Wisconsin to Seattle, down to San Diego, and back to Wisconsin through Colorado. We had the school station wagon, a gasoline credit card, and \$10.00 a week for each of us for meals while traveling. Just picture that!

When asked about his love of GNU, Dan responded that he loves "that we work at being the best we can be; and keep sharp by competing." During his membership with GNU, one highlight for him was the Fargo 10th Anniversary gathering. A second special GNU memory was riding the shuttle bus in San Francisco with Jim Clancy (Vocal Majority director) and his wife after we won the 5th place medal. Mr. Clancy said "you guys did a super job ... my wife had you in 3rd place." High praise indeed.

We might add that the always cordial and always smiling Vander Ploegs have graced us with their presence, and have been friends to us all. Their ability to maintain their positive, sunny dispositions make them role models for us all.



The Andersons (pictured counter clockwise) Steve in the red, Rick, Abby, Michael, and Joseph.

Jim Emery and one of the many guest singers waiting for the signal to go out on the field.

More "dome" pictures

The 355 man Barbershop chorus singing on the Metrodome field



Barbershop touches lives of many different people

My daughter, Karla, has a rare disorder called Rett Syndrome. Information on Rett can be found at www.rettsyndrome.org. Karla has been working with a music therapist for many years and through her patience, Karla has been able to compose a number of songs.

Karla currently attends White Bear Lake High School, and I have been visiting her schools on Valentines Day since I started barbershopping in 1994. It is a very rewarding and enriching experience for the quartet. This is just a small example of the way Barbershop can touch lives and make an impact on those who are less fortunate

Cleon Wahlin
Lead - Great Northern Union
Lead - PRISM



Upcoming Performances

**July 4th - 11th Salt Lake City
International Competition**

**July 19th Como Park
performance**

Sept 18th Fairmont, MN show

The Great Northern Union Chorus meets every Thursday from 7:00pm to 10:00pm, at the United Methodist Church of Peace, 6345 Xerxes Ave S, Richfield MN 55423

“Early-Bird” rehearsals are held at 6:00pm for practicing choreography. Members are urged to call the GNU Hotline at 763-476-7383 weekly for the latest word on rehearsals, performances, and other pertinent information. Also find us on the web at www.gnunion.com

After Midnight
a barbershop quartet

Tom Matchinsky
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Got Music?
Have a
Nouveau
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**Dave Tony
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A SPECTRUM OF SOUND

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612.281.5609

ROD JOHNSON - Lead - JIM FOY - Bass
RICK ANDERSON - Bari - BOB DOWNUM - Tenor

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