



GNU's News

International Medalist GREAT NORTHERN UNION CHORUS

February 28, 2010

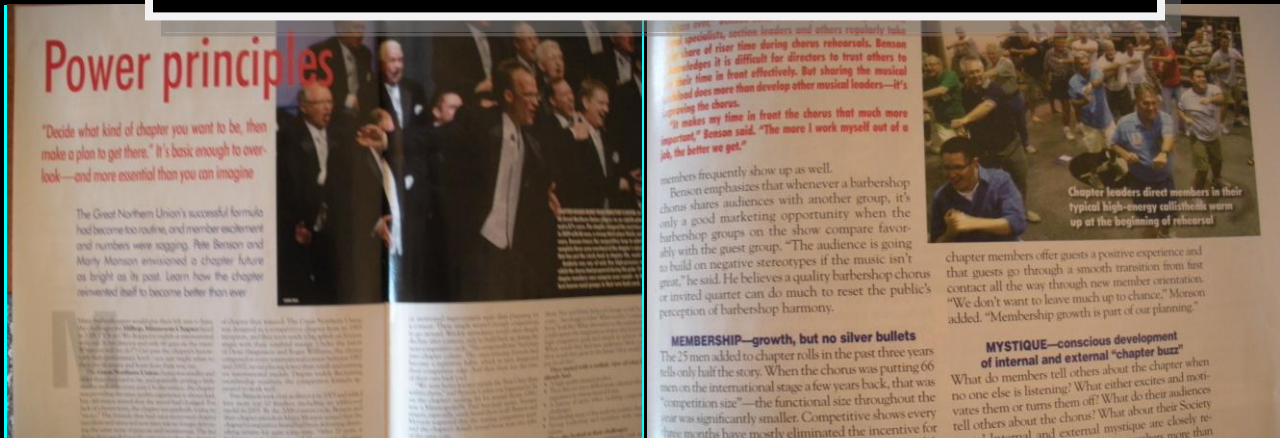
Hilltop Chapter

Volume 15

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GNU featured in "The Harmonizer!"



The Great Northern Union's success formula was the cover story for the latest edition of the Barbershop Harmony Society's Official Publication. The seven page spread by Editor Lorin May includes interview quotes from Director Pete Benson, Chapter Development VP Marty Monson, numerous photos, and an outline of the current five "M" plan which helped propel the chorus to their 3rd place finish at the International Contest in Anaheim last summer.

View complete story online at barbershop.org

GNU Wows Audience at Charity Event



Eastview High School in Apple Valley, Minnesota was the site of the Second Annual Voices of Hope Concert on February 5th. The event benefitted The Angel Foundation, a charity whose mission is to improve the quality of life throughout the cancer experience by providing financial assistance and support to cancer patients and their families throughout the community. The Angel Foundation has been able to prevent homelessness, keep utilities connected and ensure that families have food to eat. All proceeds will help provide emergency financial assistance to afflicted families. The appreciative crowd honored the Great Northern Union with multiple standing ovations during their performance. The chorus thoroughly enjoyed supporting this worthy cause.



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Photos by Kathy Litchfield

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GNU's News February 28, 2010



**Director's
Corner
by Peter
Benson**

We are well underway with our 2010 concert season and already gearing up for our 2nd and 3rd concerts of the year. We are sounding better than ever, learning a plethora of great new music, welcoming several guests and new members, and are the cover story of the latest Harmonizer. What more could we want? I'm glad you asked. Here it is. The next time we are featured in the Harmonizer, I would prefer to be on the BACK COVER! (if you know what I mean)

I am delighted to tell you that many things are falling into place for our next contest cycle and pursuit of a Gold Medal in Kansas City. We have most of our music and coaches already in place as well as a rigorous performing schedule. But, if we're serious about "the gold", we must realize that we are still missing one very crucial part of the puzzle: More Men on the Risers!

I have chosen to dedicate my article to this topic because I want you all to understand the urgency of our situation. The time is now, not 5 months from now. There is not a singular silver bullet for growth, but there needs to be many bullets being fired all the time. New members trickling in once in awhile will not get us the results we need soon enough. We seriously need to think about an average of one new person visiting every week.

What can you do? "How" versus "Why". In my experience, knowing how to do something is not nearly as important as

knowing why. If we can convince ourselves of the “why”, we can usually figure out the “how”. For now, please get involved, and don’t assume that this issue will be taken care of by someone else. Now is the time to share the Great Northern Union experience!

For additional motivation, click here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmDGntpZC3I>



Three quartets featuring members of the Great Northern Union helped serenade the Twin Cities with Singing Valentines Thursday February 11 through Sunday February 14.



Grand Avenue with KARE 11's Belinda Jensen

Organizer Gene Foeller reports that his quartet, Grand Avenue, did 25 independent performances plus 15 for the Hennepin court system and other places downtown with Steven Aldrich. They also appeared on KARE 11 television and did another 5 promotional Valentines. Foeller says, "It was a total of 30 hours on the road. I can't say our wives are too happy, and they have no problem telling us we owe them big. I am hoping that next year there will be more for everyone. I am working on ways to book it out for 20-30 quartets." Foeller sings lead for Grand Avenue; bass singer is Roger Bull; baritone, Ricky Chaddock and tenor, Steve Nolte.



Another GNU quartet was a pick-up quartet dubbed "Senioritis". It consisted of Bob Cannella, John Babbs, Ken Gilmore, Eric Dove, and John Kleiber. Cannella reports, "We did ten paid and a few spontaneous freebies; one on Thursday, three on Friday and the rest on Saturday."



Bob Griffith was also part of a quartet that performed nine Singing Valentines. Bass Jim Foy said of their group, "We called ourselves 'The Gold Plated Relics'. Two of us are gold winners and at our age, we consider ourselves relics."



The St Paul Pioneer Press helped promote all the Twin Cities' area Barbershop Harmony Society Chapter's Singing Valentine efforts with a feature story on February 10th.

Guest Nights a.k.a. "Who's GNU?"



"What a night, you're a wonderful sight; we're glad you joined us in song! 'Cause it's a grand night to be on the risers, it's an honor to have you with the Great Northern Union; what a night to be singing a song!"

January 14 and 21 were designated as focused guest nights to help grow membership in the chorus. The song, "It's a Grand Night for Singing" was modified with the lyrics above to welcome the men that joined us on those evenings and we've continued to sing it to our guests at subsequent rehearsals. Over twenty new faces have been seen at recent rehearsals with many of them now in the audition process to join the chorus. As Director Pete Benson says in his article in this issue: inviting, welcoming and encouraging new singers is vital to our success. It must be a continuing effort. Thank you to everyone who has worked hard to recruit new singers. Ideas to improve the process are always welcome. If you have ideas please share them with the chorus leadership.

Rehearsals are held on Thursdays at 7pm at the United Methodist Church of Peace in Richfield, Minnesota. The church is located at 64th and Xerxes. For more information contact Membership Vice President Ken Slinde (he's the one on the right) gubass@comcast.net or 952-884-4975.



Don Hettinga

Photo by John Babbs

I grew up in Mankato and lived in a couple places in Southern Minnesota before landing in Owatonna.

I have been happily married for 18 years to my wife Chris. We have two children; Ethan, 7 and Lauren, 1.

I teach Social Studies at the Owatonna Alternative Learning Center.

I have been singing since childhood in church and school choirs. I joined the Society in 1981 at age 13 and competed at International with the Mankato Chapter in Detroit. I dropped out of barbershop after graduating high school. After a stint in the Army, I sang in local rock bands for about 15 years before rejoining the society in 2007.

I have no formal training in singing. Just lessons from Pete; which are very informal. I joined the GNU after moving from Rochester. I had been singing with the Rochester chapter, but after the move, I had to choose whether to drive 45 minutes to either Rochester or Mankato, or 1 hour to the Cities. I decided to go big and try both the GNU and Minneapolis chapters.

I went to the GNU rehearsal first, and still haven't made it over to Minneapolis. This chorus has blown me away from the moment I stepped on the risers. The music we choose to do, the performances we put on are just such so much fun to be a part of. The highlights of my time with the chorus have been competing in Anaheim and the tour last spring.

Outside the chorus, I am also singing in a quartet called Grand Design with Derek Glenna and two other guys. Beyond singing, I am a regular (not competitive) runner; I make homemade beer; I coach some of my son's sports teams, and as a family we like to travel and camp.



Caleb Berge

Q: Current hometown and other places you've lived?

A: Currently-Shoreview, MN Formerly-Fargo, ND

Q: Family?

A: Wife- Rebecca

Brothers- Adam & Isaac (Both younger)

Sister- Rachel (Younger)

Dad- Ivar

Mom- Becky

Q: What do you or did you do for a living?

A: Currently work at the Tile Shop in the warehouse.

Worked for WOLD Architects & Engineers in St. Paul from 2007-09 (Laid off)

Started a window cleaning business- Clear Image Window Cleaning

Own a flower shop with my wife- A Precious Petals Florist in West St. Paul

Q: How long have you been singing?

A: I started singing in church when I was fairly young. I sang in my first choir at the

Association Free Lutheran Bible College in Plymouth, MN for two years. I also sang in the choir at North Dakota State University for a year and had a vocal class there as well.

Q: Any formal musical training?

A: I learned to read notes playing saxophone in high school and had a voice lesson at NDSU but that's all the formal training I have.

Q: How long a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society?

A: 3 years.

Q: Briefly describe your Great Northern Union Experience so far?

A: I've thoroughly enjoyed singing with the GNU. Especially singing tags.

Q: Any other hobbies or things you think might be of interest?

A: I like any competitive sport you can think of.

Played on the NDSU men's volleyball club team.

Enjoy freelance graphic design.

Addicted to Adobe Photoshop.

Always looking for pinochle players.

Have a major sweet tooth.



GNU – Going for the Gold in a Social Media Way



By Alex

Donaldson

Many of you may not know what the GNU

has been doing in the social media aspect of the world. For a little over a year now, the Great Northern Union has really been stepping up its game in order to further extend our fan base.

It started a little over a year ago when I was asked to step up and take over the Great Northern Union's Facebook group (probably due to the fact that as a college student, most of my time is spent on Facebook). In this time the GNU's Facebook group has proceeded to double its membership.

As a major player in the social media world, Facebook has a vast user base.

During this time we have also created a "fan page" which also allows us another presence on Facebook that may be able to reach other prospective fans that a group page may not appeal to. We use Facebook as another way to announce upcoming performances and to promote different Great Northern Union events in order to help draw in more potential ticket buyers.

We feel that using the different aspects of social media helps do other things. It can help draw in potential recruits. It is a very good way to keep our fans up to date on the recent "happenings" of the Great Northern Union.

The Great Northern Union has also added a Twitter page to its social media weaponry. We feel that we can use Twitter as another way to keep in touch with our fans and to promote upcoming performances.



Coming Events

**See more online: gnunion.com*

Let There Be Music - Vallee de Croix Concert

Date: Saturday, March 6
Time: 7:00
Location: St. Andrews Lutheran Church -
Mahtomedi, MN

The GNU will be a featured guest in "Let There Be Music," an evening of music presented by the Vallee de Croix Chorus. Other performers include the 2005 Int'l Quartet Champions The Buzz and the Saint Paul Conservatory of Music. The Vallee de Croix Chorus from Stillwater has been entertaining audiences in the St. Croix Valley Area since 1983. In 2002 and 2004, VDC took gold in the Sweet Adelines Regional Competition. Join the GNU, VDC, and The Buzz in this exceptional concert of high impact harmony.

6th Annual Collegiate Men's Chorus Festival

Date: Saturday, March 13
Time: 7:30 PM
Location: Nativity Of Our Lord Catholic Church
- St. Paul, MN

The Great Northern Union celebrates its 6th Annual Collegiate Chorus Festival by welcoming the Singing Statesmen from UW Eau Claire under the direction of Gary Schwartzhoff and the 2009 Collegiate Quartet Champions The Vagrants. Witness this collaboration of collegiate male voices in a concert full of youthful song and unique harmonies.

Luther College Norsemen Invitational

Date: Friday, April 16
Time: 7:00 PM
Location: Center For Faith & Life - Decorah,
IA

GNU is hitting the road for a south-of-the-border tour to Iowa.

We are guests of the Luther College Norsemen and the Luren Singers of Decorah and will perform on the beautiful campus of Luther College. Spring into Decorah as the GNU re-unites with the Norsemen and teams up to perform championship high impact harmony at its best.

Thursday April 22 – Joe Connelly Coaching
 Friday May 14 – Judy Potzgay Coaching, Choreography **FRONT ROW ONLY**
 Saturday May 15 -- Judy Potzgay, Coaching, Choreography

“To Future Hope”, A Gospel Benefit

Date: Saturday, June 19
Time: 7:30 PM
Location: Shepard of the Valley Lutheran- Apple Valley, MN

Give your support to this gospel benefit as the Great Northern Union joins other ensembles in harmony to rally and support the “To Future Hope” cause, a family in the Twin Cities with two chronically ill sisters. With mounting medical costs over and above what insurance will cover, all proceeds of this concert will help the family’s medical bills. Join the GNU, Sweetwater Revival, and 4Given as we come together to support “To Future Hope” and the Maccoux sisters.

Como Park Barbershop Sing-out

Date: Tuesday, July 13
Time: 6:00PM
Location: Como Park Pavilion - St. Paul MN

The GNU will be one of many local Barbershop Harmony Society chapters performing in this annual summer event. The Como Park Pavilion provides a great lakeside location for an evening of wonderful entertainment.

Saturday July 24 – Mark Hale Coaching
 Thursday August 5 - Gig, Northfield, MN
 All State Choir, St. Olaf

2010 MN Twins Barbershop Day @ Target Field

Date: Sunday, August 22
Time: 1:00 PM

Location: Target Field - Minneapolis, MN

Play Ball! The GNU will join with up with our brother barbershop chapters and guests to sing our National Anthem before the Minnesota Twins game against the Anaheim Angels in the inaugural season of brand new Target Field.



According to an article submitted to the The Pitch Piper by event coordinator Ken Slinde, the Twins have reserved section 139 for us. It is the top tan colored section in the right field corner, facing home plate. Cost of the seats will be just \$17. We will sing the National Anthem on the field. Then from section 139 we’ll lead the crowd in singing God Bless America and Take Me Out to the Ballgame during the 7th inning stretch. For more info contact Ken Slinde at [gnubass@comcast.net](mailto:g nubass@comcast.net) or 952-884-4975.

Youth In Harmony Autumn Choral Classic

Date: Saturday, September 25
Time: 7:30pm
Location: St Michael's Lutheran Church - Bloomington, MN

The Great Northern Union and the Minnesota Boy Choir team up to present a return of the popular Youth In Harmony concert collaboration. The Minnesota Boy Choir, directed by Mark Johnson, challenges boys and young men from many backgrounds to the highest standards of choral music.

Monday October 4 - EXTRA rehearsal
Monday October 11 - EXTRA rehearsal
Friday October 22 through Sunday October 24 – District, Fargo, ND

2010 Season Finale featuring Storm Front Quartet

Date: Saturday, November 13 &
Sunday, November 14
Time: 7:00pm & 2pm
Location: Benson Great Hall, Bethel Univ. -
Arden Hills MN

The GNU returns to Benson Great Hall for our final concerts of 2010. Traditionally our biggest concerts of the season, the 2010 Season Finales will feature championship performances and spectacular a cappella singing in an intimate concert setting. Sharing the stage with the GNU will be the 2009 3rd place BHS medalist Storm Front Quartet. Be a part of this exceptional concert experience as we celebrate our 2010 season and look ahead to our exciting 25th anniversary.

Rehearsals from Finale through the end of the year





Jeremy Ganswindt *Tenor*
 Jay Fahl *Lead*
 Bryan Ziegler *Baritone*
 Jake Umhoefer *Bass*
 Contact Jake at bbrshopper@yahoo.com

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