



GNU's NEWS

THE GREAT NORTHERN UNION CHORUS NEWS
for the
HILLTOP CHAPTER

10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O'LAKES DISTRICT

of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.



GNU's NEWS

Vol. 7 – Issue # 1

Jan - April 2002

Performances, Performances

The Great Northern Union has been extraordinarily busy with performances during the winter months. Our annual show in January was followed by performances at MMEA, Northfield and many singing Valentines.

NORTHFIELD WINTER FESTIVAL

By Emery Nelson

Roger Stanfield has a strange neighbor in Burnsville. (Where is Burnsville, anyway?) At rehearsal following Rod Johnson's fabulous Northfield Winter Festival, Roger reported that his neighbor's comment about the GNU's performance was a mere... "Good". Was he there? Did he watch it on TV at a local bar? Was he employed by ENRON?

Merely good? The audience was awed! A crowd of young people in the back of the room gave us standing "Os" after many numbers and yelling enthusiastically with their arms in the air!

It was truly a delight to be a member of the GNU! The audience wasn't large, but believe me, Maestro Williams had us ringing delicious chords and it was FUN for everyone!

On a personal note, my wife and I followed Rod's advice and stayed overnight to take in the afternoon concert on Sunday. An extra treat was to eat lunch at the Archer house. Built in 1877, it had wonderful food in an old-fashioned atmosphere.

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GNU at the Northfield Winter Music Festival

GNU 2002 ANNUAL SHOW - Who Will Buy?

The Annual Show was held in January this year with The Gas House Gang as the headliners. Also singing our own past District Champions; Innovation and Bravo!

GNU's songs included Gospel and Patriotic sets, last year's contest set and "Minnie the Moocher" featuring audience participation lead by Jim Emery.

The chorus sang on platforms of different heights instead of the traditional risers. This created a very different feel for the audience as well as the performers. It was a more relaxed and intimate setting and the chorus could move and perform better than ever. Many of our patrons claimed this to be our best annual show yet.

Mark your calendars now ...

GNU's 2003 show will be held January 5th and will feature **Michigan Jake** – 2001 International Champions

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Northfield, continued

They even gave us a cup labeled "F. Melius Christianson"! (What a treasure!).

Arriving at the Middle School on time, we found Rod Johnson and Bob Dowma as greeters, ushers and stage runners. I ran into people I knew and they told everyone within hearing distance, "This gentleman sang in that terrific GNU concert last night!" Many people's eyes lit up as they praised the "WONDERFUL performance." They were WOWED!

The afternoon singing groups were "good", but **Cantus** was OUTSTANDING! This group of 10 men sang with beautiful accuracy and harmony, ringing overtones and singing very difficult numbers with great precision. They have 70 gigs already lined up for 2002! We were so glad we took Rod's advice. From now on, when Rod speaks---LISTEN! (I place him right up there with Smith-Barney!)

**COMING EVENTS**

- May 17-19th – Duluth "Advance"
- May 23rd - Director Audition
- June 6th – Director Audition
- June 15th – Show of Champions
- June 23rd – Church Performance
- July 1 – 7th – International Competition



Flash!

All the flashing you see during rehearsals and shows are from Theresa Meyer and her new digital camera. These photos are used in the GNU's News, so be sure you always have on your best performance face – you never know where Theresa will be next!

HUMBLE PIE!

Emery Nelson
Former GNU's News Editor

My humble apologies to Doug Miller, Lance Johnson, Glenn Aronson and Dave Wahl of **Special Alliance** for my gross error in the last bulletin!

While trying to give credit to all the great quartets with Hilltop personnel in the Land O'Lakes 2001 District Contest at Rochester, I neglected to highlight **Special Alliance**, another top ten quartet, finishing in seventh place! A very respectable accomplishment considering the tough competition.

Now, showing a little GNU pride---I want to list all the "GNU" quartets again---IN ORDER:

- Bravo! in First place,
- Nouvea, 3rd place,
- Custom Blend, 4th place
- Special Alliance, 7th place
- Relative Pitch, 11th place
- Moldy Oldies, 17th place

How is that for dominating the quartet competition of the LOL? No wonder it is so much fun to sing with GNU every week! It charges up my "harmony battery" with weekly performance thrills.

Finally, let me add the winners of the LOL District quartet contest for the last three years have been from Hilltop!

Again---apologies to Doug, Lance, Glenn and Dave. (I qualify for "senior moments" you know. Bob Moksnes and I used to be tied for the 'Old Timer' title, but now, is it just me?)



Tony Derosa leads a GNU rehearsal

Chipping away for 3 solid hours at what Singing Coach Tony Derosa tells us is "a lot of work to be done before International". A big message was to remember the consonants when singing songs with intense emotion. As always, he was supportive, encouraging and full of constructive suggestions that should get us noticed in Portland.

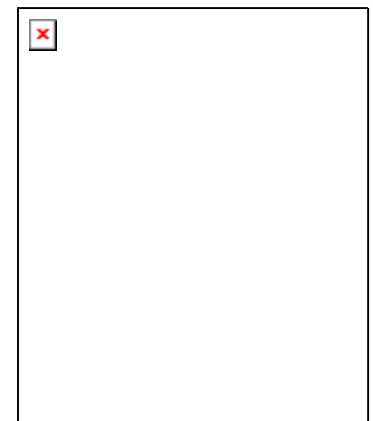
We look forward to more of these sessions and plan on hard work between and during his visits.. He assists us in seeing how to "live" our music when we are singing to perform at the highest possible level.

Presentation Coach Dwain Brobst spent a most creative evening with us on Thursday, April 18. The session was geared toward learning how to enhance the lyrics by visually expressing various musical ideas. We need to continue adding those visual cues for every music phrase we sing and even change visually within a phase for some of the more important single-word ideas.

Sure is fun to entertain!



The Great Northern Union Chorus sings at the Minnesota Music Educators statewide conference, February 15th. Even though GNU sang late in the evening, those who stayed enjoyed a great performance.



Dwain Brobst "I, (state your name) Solemnly Swear..."

DIVISION CONTEST

At Stillwater Junior High school on Saturday, March 16, a very expressive and talented **Live Wire** from GNU won the 10,000 Lakes Division Championship as well as the Novice Award. The members of that group are Steve Hardy, Steve Anderson, Brent Buresh, and Scott Kvigne. Congratulations!



Congratulations are also due to the following GNU quartets who also qualified to sing at the Fall District Contest: **Special Alliance**, **Relative Pitch**, and **LazerTonez!** Also performing well were **Rhythm and Schmooze**, but unfortunately missed the cutoff by only 7 points. And, of course, **Live Wire** qualified for the District competition in the fall.

Of the seven quartets from the 10,000 Lakes Division, five were members of GNU. The contest also included six quartets from Southwest Division.

Our own John Babbs acted as Master of Ceremonies for both the quartet and chorus sessions. Roger Meyer, Judd Orff and Roger Stanfield were on the judging panel. It was a wonderful day of barbershop singing.

The evaluation/coaching sessions with the judges lasted until 8:00 PM. Singing in the hallways was still going strong when those sessions ended.

GUEST NIGHT

An extraordinary time was had by all on Thursday, March 21. Twenty-one guests experienced the joy of singing on the risers with the **Great Northern Union** chorus. Members and guests alike are still talking about what fun it was. In addition to riser time with the guests, the chorus demonstrated in

song the diverse GNU repertoire. Additionally, the newly crowned Division Contest Novice Champs, **Live Wire**, performed their songs with lots of style and expression, not to mention musical excellence.

Throughout the evening, small presentations were given by Tom Matchinsky, Jim Emery, Roger Williams, Scott Kvigne, Roger Meyer, Roger Stanfield, Jim Higgins, Stan Meyer, and Jim Lutz.

Nearly everyone lingered for quite awhile, singing tags, schmoozing, and enjoying cookies, which were provided by several members and their wives.

GNU members and invited guests:

- Duane Hutton brought Nathan Hutton, Shannon and Shawn Hecksel from Inver Grove Heights
- Chuck McKown brought Bruce Peck from Inver Grove Heights and Jack Benson from New Brighton
- Mike Dove brought Jim Emmers, Peter Strackbein from Mankato, Clair Nassen from Blue Earth and Dan True from Chanhassen
- Cleon Wahlin brought Steve Nolte from Belle Plain
- Bill Lydecker brought Cameron Mahlum from St. Paul
- Bob Wedberg brought Bob Wedberg from Fargo (*how'd he do that?*)
- Mike Brama brought Lonnie Haase from Cedar
- Mike Laurel brought Jim Bontreger from Bloomington
- Larry Castriotta brought Jason Howard from Minneapolis
- Bruce Gray and Charles Johnson both brought Carter Diers from Annandale
- Brent Buresh brought along Michael de Leon from Bloomington
- Dave Speidel brought Paul Teie from Reierstown, MD (*look from how far they come to sing with GNU!*)
- Tony Blackwood brought Brian Blackwood from Shakopee
- Marty Monson brought Eric Monson from Lincoln, Nebraska, and Patrick Schoenecker from Minneapolis

SINGING VALENTINES – Barbershop Style



Darrell Egertson, Don Knecht, Rich Slind, Roger Meyer, singing to a Valentine on February, 14th

Romance was literally in the air as GNU members sang Singing Valentines on February 14th. All went well this year thanks to Tom Semple for once again organizing our chapter quartets for this fun event.

We had 23 members in a total of 7 quartets that did 47 visits to Valentines all over the Twin Cities. Together they raised over \$2275 for the chorus coffers. Good Job, Men!

Contest Prep!

"You should have heard us in the warm-up room. Our contest set was awesome".

Kevin Keller
Bari, Cheers! MUS Judge

May I never hear these words ever again. It literally breaks my heart to hear quartets and choruses utter these words.

There is an electricity, an energy, a magic that occurs when you go to contest. From the moment you arrive, the energy builds. The butterflies shake the dust off their wings and begin their stretching exercises. The rest of the world's trials and tribulations are set aside for that 6 minutes on stage. You go through some preliminary meetings, chit-chatting, etc.. That's all fine and good. Gets all the butterflies fully awake and ready for action.

Then, finally, there's the meeting of the singers (hotel rooms for quartets and ballrooms for choruses). You sing through the songs. "Holy cow

- we've never sung it that well". Well, duh, of course. You've been practicing, and more importantly, you're focused on the task at hand. The moment is NOW. All this singing and practicing is productive. Tweaks here and there. More focus. The excitement builds, the anticipation!

Then rehearsal is over. "Gosh, if we could sing like this all the time!". Time to put on the duds, put on the makeup. Energy is beginning to heighten. Looking sharp. Butterflies have been put into stage alert. The group reassembles. You begin "The Pattern", a myriad of walking from room to room, photos, trips in cars/vans/busses, all designed to increase the energy and magnitude of the event. The electricity heightens. The anticipation of that magical moment when you want to unleash your very best to a hungry crowd of family, friends, and judges. There's the theater. You're directed to your warm-up room. All systems go, and then it kicks in. Feeling a little nervous. Haven't sung a note in 15-20 minutes (or more). I wonder if it's there? "Let's run a set, guys (ladies)!" And that performance of your contest set is absolutely the pinnacle of your barbershop career. Everything is working, even the stuff that normally gives you problems is magical. What fun - you don't want it to end. Whoops and high-five's all around. "Cool, let's get the show on the road".

And with that performance, all of the hours of pent-up energy, excitement, and magic is gone and unrecoverable in time for the stage. Just the butterflies remain. I've yet to figure out why singers and directors are obsessed with putting on a performance right before they go on stage. Not all do, and they are usually the ones that have learned from experience! To



me, the worst story is "our host wanted to see and hear the contest set". Sure, that host is a wonderful person who, bless his/her heart, doesn't get to see the contest so you feel obligated. Sorry, but given the choice of a disappointed host and a performance of my lifetime for 1000 people, or a thrilled host and disappointing performance, I'll take the former.

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Contest Prep, continued

Assuming that the group has sung each of the songs 1537 times, the notes and words are pretty well down. If you don't have it now, nothing will help! It boils down to a simple word: "Trust".

Trust is so important at many levels of music and performance. I have to trust that when I go on stage, the guys in my quartet/chorus will do their job. I'm responsible for doing mine to the best of my ability, and when I feel their trust in me, I perform even better. I have to trust that when I open my mouth, a sound will come out. I have to trust that all of the changes we worked on will happen and if they don't, chances are I won't even know it until I listen to the tape, anyway (and the judges didn't know about the changes to begin with)! I have to trust that my "muscle" memory and the habits established in rehearsal will carry me, for I will be captured in that magical moment and will want to ride it for all its worth. I trust that the excitement and energy and magic will control the butterflies and get them headed in a positive direction. Many times, in that magical moment, I and my fellow singers will be so caught up in the moment that it all goes black (in the zone) - I trust we know each other well enough to take advantage of that special opportunity and I trust my body and subconscious mind to do its thing and respond. And with this approach, my trust has never failed. And has never failed anybody that I've walked through the pattern.

When I walk choruses and quartets through the pattern, as well as in any of my quartets, we sing the intro of each song, and then the intro of the first song once again as our "making sure the voice works", the assurance that each of us needs. That's it. Keep the lid on the pot and let it simmer, let it cook. The rest of the time, it is positive reinforcement of the journey and the love for each other. When I directed a chorus at District one year, several members were almost nervous how little we were singing getting close to stage. Obviously, they had previously sung right to stage. My response was, "You'll be awesome. You sound great right now. We're ready". And they were. They sang at their potential, because they wanted to unleash what was inside them and I waited until stage to let them do so. In the warm-up room, I wouldn't even let them stand on the risers.

So, at the outset of the spring competitions with SPEBS prelims and division contests, SAI Regions and HI Areas, save your magic for the stage! May no one say, "you should have heard us in the warm-up room!". Great performances for everyone.

Cheers!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

JEFF SJOBERG

Formerly an active member, Jeff is on hiatus, since he has not found a way to make 36-hour days a reality. He is very busy with his own business, Gopher



State Concrete and with his 3 children, ages 10, 8, and 5. Jeff lives in Lakeville with his lovely wife Kris, and those 3 kids.

Not one to stand by idly, he has made major contributions to the chapter during his stint away from singing with us. His moral support is invaluable; and it is he who has purchased thousands of dollars of airline tickets for the purpose of importing expert coaches. Additionally he heavily contributed financially to the chapter party while we were at Nashville.

Huge thanks are due to Jeff for his big-time contribution of uncounted dollars and support in order to provide these perks. We are in your debt, Jeff! Please come back soon and join in our fun. You will be welcome with open arms.

MARILYN SETZLER

As many of you know, Marilyn is the widow of GNU member, Ron Setzler, who died rather young, of cancer, 5 years ago. Marilyn lives in Wayzata, and recently retired from teaching.



She is currently writing a book about the history of her hometown, Carroll, Iowa. Marilyn was music major in college, which is

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Marilyn Setzler, continued

where she met Ron many years ago.

Knowing that GNU was a big part of Ron's life, Marilyn has continued to enjoy shows and associations with some of the members. She has contributed financially to our chapter over the years. Her large donation of \$5,000 last year went toward the uniform fund. We happen to know that she has already made a substantial contribution again in 2002. Marilyn, we are very grateful for your allegiance and your assistance.

Thank you! Ron would be proud.

VETERAN'S HOSPITAL SHOW

The GNU's show at the Veteran's Hospital in Minneapolis was on April 11. The crowd, including many in wheelchairs, showed involvement and

emotion with the love songs, the funny stuff and the especially to the patriotic songs. The evening was a success. One patient even stayed to enjoy the rehearsal, which followed the performance.

Master of Ceremony, Judd Orff's final and most appropriate thank you to the crowd at the Veteran's Hospital performance was "not only thanks for coming but also for serving our country and for keeping us free". The Great Northern members followed their well-received program by venturing into the audience and shaking hands with many of those who attended.

Scott Kvigne and Roger Stanfield conducted our rehearsal at the same site, which proved to get us a step or so closer to the stellar performance needed in Portland. We felt our enthusiasm and performance skills build toward that goal. With only two months to go we realize the necessity to work weekly, (and more), to hone these things toward perfection.



Montage sings at a recent GNU rehearsal



The Great Northern Union sings at the Veterans Hospital.



GNU's News
Our readers want to know...

Get the word out about your GNU chapter quartet. Send us your business card and we will publish it in an upcoming edition of GNU's News

**The Great Northern Union Chorus Bulletin
Hilltop Chapter, S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., Inc.**

**Steve Anderson, B.E.
4001 W 135th St.
Savage, MN 55378**

Rehearsals: Thursday evenings at 7:30pm
At The Greater Minneapolis Jewish Community
Center, 4330 Cedar Lake Road, St. Louis Park, MN

The Great Northern Union Chorus meets weekly from 7:30 to 10:00p, at the Greater Minneapolis Jewish Community Center, 4330 Cedar Lake Road in St. Louis Park. Driving North on Hwy. 100 take Cedar Lake Rd. exit and follow to end; driving south, take 394 W, exit on Park Place, which runs in to Cedar Lake Rd. The telephone number at rehearsals is 612-377-8330. "Early-Bird" rehearsals are held at 6:30pm for practicing S.P. moves. Members are urged to call the GNU Hotline at 651-643-4468 weekly for the latest word on rehearsals, performances, and other pertinent information.

