



*International Medalist*  
**GREAT NORTHERN UNION**  
**CHORUS**



HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION – LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

Vol. 8 - Issue #3

# GNU's NEWS

April 2003

## Coaches and Coaching



*Greg Volk*

**Greg Volk**, a local arranger, came to a recent rehearsal to help us with his arrangement of That's A Plenty which we will be singing in Montreal. He had a very direct, matter-of-fact way of presenting what he felt the song needed from an interpretive standpoint. What he suggested really helped to propel the chorus toward a more exciting performance. It is great to have such wonderful talent so close to home.

**Mark Hale**, Masters of Harmony director and lead of International Quartet Champion, Michigan Jake, came all the way from California for a special Saturday rehearsal as we prepare for the international competition this summer in Montreal.

Mark primarily worked on vocal technique as we went through our contest package. The following are some of the many gems he spoke while imparting his wisdom: "The first thing is you have to be willing to change". "I am here as a friend". "Let's try to score some points. Let's get some unity". "The good choruses do it this way... good



*Mark Hale*

choruses... doesn't have to be a big chorus." "We have to find a way to feature the 7ths on the ballad."

This was said over and over: "Be obsessive!" It is not optional. It is very important." "One point per judge (or even just one point!) can be the difference between getting a medal, or not!" Suffice it to say, our homework is laid out. Now we simply must execute. The competition is getting tougher and If we want to get one of those rare medals, we need to get the contest scores into the 90's. We have shown that we are capable of doing just that! Do we want to? You betcha!

Well known to some of us old timers, **Judy "Ode" Olson** graced our rehearsal recently for an hour of presentation coaching.

Judy, who has been at this for decades, has been known to do a bit of song and dance herself and is the director of a local Sweet Adelines chorus.



*Judy Olson*

Her theme as she led us through "That's A Plenty" was that Presentation should only made up of moves that enhance the music. Additionally, since the audience does not see three dimensions, some actions must be done in profile and larger than life. Cooperation among the chorus, our leaders, and Judy made for some interesting enhancements which should take us closer to a better performance.

**CHAPTER LEADERS**

President	Roger Meyer	763-476-7382(H)
Immediate Past President	John Babbs	952-474-9404(H)
Secretary	Dave Miller	952-432-7048(H)
Treasurer	John Babbs	952-474-9404(H)
Music VP	Scott Kvigne	952-431-0596(H)
Marketing VP	Steve Aldrich	612-379-4352(H)
Membership VP	Jim Higgins	952-848-0831(H)
Fund Development Vice President	Harvey Berwin	651-698-3515(H)
Mem. At Large	Daryl Mortek	651-429-1170(H)
Mem. At Large	Dan Vander Ploeg	612-339-2596(H)
Mem. At Large	Bill Lydeker	715-426-7756(H)
Chorus Mgr. VP	Kent Erlandson	952-944-9934(H)
Presentation	Roger Stanfield	952-440-3678(H)
Librarian	Ken Gilmore	651-770-1536(H)
Sunshine	Theresa Meyer	763-476-7382(H)
Uniforms	Ron Geldert	763-529-4417(H)
	<b>DIRECTOR</b>	
Pete Benson		701-642-2484(H)

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

Scott Kvigne		952-431-0596(H)
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**SECTION LEADERS**

Tenor	Tom Matchinsky	612-743-9345(H)
Lead	Tony Blackwood	952-922-4564(H)
Bari	Scott Kvigne	952-431-0596(H)
Bass	Mark Jurgensen	507-534-6543(H)

**BULLETIN EDITORS**

Roger and Theresa Meyer Email: roger.theresa@meyer.net		763-476-7382(H)
Steve and Shirley Anderson Email: sander1159@aol.com		952-894-9030(H)

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**Presidents Corner**

What kind of a chapter do we have? What kind of a chapter do we want? What should we do about it? Perennial questions for any group; so how can we apply this to our specific needs as we hit the home stretch to a stellar performance in Montreal?



These are all questions that seem to have resurfaced more this year than they have for awhile. For sure the entire membership has to define the answers to the above questions. This will be an evolution of sorts and here are some random thoughts.

Originally, with much thought and much anguish, the first couple of dozen or so guys decided to set out to develop a new chorus whose main mission was to achieve fun through musical excellence. What was to differentiate us from other groups was that, in addition to the wonderful camaraderie, which I hope will always be a part of any barbershop organization, the Great Northern Union set about trying to become a championship chorus with International recognition.

To a large degree this has happened. To some degree, it has not. The quality of our performances generally has improved over the years; however so has the quality of several other serious contenders on the International scene. This, then leads us at least with two scenarios to contemplate: how do we maintain hope and self-esteem and achieve as high a level of performance as possible? In large part we are doing it: we have excellent coaches, a wonderful director, a great music team, and we have committed performers. But it appears that we still have to stretch some more.

Are we each meeting our personal goals? How do these goals fit with the overall stated goals of the entire group? Is there an untapped recourse yet to be developed? You see more questions than answers.

I suggest that this is in part an invitation for some introspective reflections: We must ask ourselves: what can I still do to improve my personal performance so that my fellow members can follow my lead? This answer should come with some soul searching and commitment.

Not everyone has more to give. Some are already giving 110%. Some have personal reasons that prevent participation for now. So be it. In that case, we re-invite your participation for the next round that begins in some sense right after International. A new CD is forthcoming, and we are beginning 2004 show preparations now. Are you on board?

Roger Meyer, President, GNU

## Oops!

Note of apology is due to **John Babbs**. He was not properly acknowledged as the writer of the wonderful story about teacher extraordinaire, **Larry Gere**, in the last issue of the GNU's News. Thank you, John, for your contribution. Keep up the good work

## Duluth - May 16 – 18<sup>th</sup>

As most of you know the "Duluth" weekend, held in May each year, was originally held at Quadna as a "retreat" situation. It is designed as a way to be free of the distractions of our normal lives in order to get significantly closer to our goals for International competition each July. We are looking forward to a very productive weekend and we thank each of you and your families for making it happen. This is a significant sacrifice for many, and it is appreciated.

Highlighting this year's weekend are three excellent coaches and a paid performance Saturday evening sponsored by the Duluth chapter.

### GNU on the World Wide Web

"Tune in" and stay informed.



*Big Thanks to **Daryl Morteck** for using his professional knowledge to video tape our presentation package so we can send it to the coaches.*

Hello Men!

Just wanted to remind you that **every rehearsal night is Guest Night!** Just think of one good singer that you know and if we all brought **one** to a rehearsal other than "Guest Night", we could capture the imagination of a good percentage of them and we would increase our membership.

Remember, our brand of barbershop singing is not what your grandfather or in some cases your great grandfather sang. We have an exciting sound with lots of energy, not to mention our professional quality. Some of your "prospects" have heard other barbershop groups before. Remind them that we are one of the best barbershop choruses in the world. You don't have to be a "Salesman" to tell someone what a great time you have every week or about the "high" you get by singing to a FULL HOUSE!! Just think about the wonderful favor you can do for a singer by inviting him to a rehearsal. John Babbs tells how joining the GNU completely changed his life... (For the better, I might add).

Tell your singing friends about your wonderful hobby and *bring them over!*

Sincerely,

**Jim Higgins**, Membership Vice President

### The New Hotline #



**763-476-7383**

## Un-Sung Heroes

Here's to the wonderful talent that we are fortunate to have in the Great Northern Union. Not only do we have 9 Society Judges, with 2 more in the process of qualifying, but also there are many other guys who share their talents with us. Here are but a few of them.



**Bob Dowma**, Tenor of 1975 International Quartet Champion, Happiness Emporium, doing a little directing.



**Scott Kvigne**, Assistant Director and Society Presentation Judge Candidate, takes over the director duties when Pete is not with us.



**Steve Case** (left), Bass of the 1999 District Quartet Champion, Trademark, leading a tag.

**Jim Emery**, Society Singing Judge, teaching technique while warming us up.



## Members; Get to know 'em

### Bob Cannella

Our Bob Cannella has been a GNU since 1987, and before that sang with the St. Paul chapter. He and his wife Shirley have lived in Eagan for 33 years, since his discharge from the Air Force.

After his 15 years as a Navigator/Radar Intercept officer, he was in air traffic control and then in law support for Control Data. Finally, he became a mail carrier making a total of 42 years in federal service.

Currently retired, he now has time to baby-sit. He and Shirley have two married kids and 4 grandkids.



Bob played folk guitar in his younger years; and he got a little music education at McPhail while at the U of M. That's not all to his musical background. He was in a musical production of HMS Pinafore in high school as well as in band and choir back then. (Way back then!).

Since becoming a barbershopper, Bob has sung with 3 quartets and is working on a fourth, still without a name. (Just in case you have a suggestion for four old guys). The previous three were "Grassroots", "Cheerful Earful", and "All Around Town".

"The challenge of singing with the best" is what attracted Bob to Great Northern Union. He loves the varied repertoire and the dedication to perfection. A very memorable event for Bob with the GNU was when the "Silent Don" (A Russian quartet) began God Bless America then was joined by a quartet, then by the entire chorus. "By the time we were through, there were no dry eyes in the chorus", he said. Two weeks later we won our first medal in San Francisco. Another peak moment for Bob was being elected GNU Barbershopper of the Year. "What a hobby!" he exclaimed.

Bob has shouldered many GNU jobs over the years. Many of these jobs he still does. He has taken on Executive Vice President, Music Team Administration, three director search teams, GNU Board nominating committee, "ticket dude", bass section leader, Board of Elders, Annual Show committee, headliner quartet procurer and the list goes on. What a guy!

Summing up his thoughts, Bob said, "Being a member of the GNU with its endless fun and forming of lifelong friendships through the joy of music will always be one of the treasured blessings of my life." What a hobby!

## That Guy With the Pitch Pipe:

### Who is Dave Bowen?

Dave has lived in Lakeville since coming to the Twin Cities from Dallas, Texas some 10 years ago. When he traveled to the Twin Cities on business before the move it became apparent that "there was only one choice to get my barbershop fix here". He joined the GNU shortly after he got to town.

While living in Dallas, he was a member of the "gold-standard" Vocal Majority chorus. Dave was born in Michigan, where his parents and younger brother still live. His parents winter in Arizona where Dave likes to join them for a little while to escape the MN snow.

Musical aptitude seems to run in his family, since his nephew is studying musical production at Michigan State. Dave himself played clarinet and sang in church choirs for many years. He has been a barbershopper for 25 years.

Currently, Dave is serving the Land O' Lakes District as the Vice President of Contest and Judging. This position takes a very large number of volunteer hours setting up all of the local contests throughout the whole district. He is also a certified Contest Administrator, a job that entails many hours to preparing for contests while still at home and on site and then all of the contest hours, evaluation time duties as well as at-home wrap up hours. So he is a busy guy. In his spare time at a later date, he might be interested in forming a quartet.

Suffice it to say that Dave keeps occupied however, due to this unfortunate age of corporate cutbacks, Dave is one of the "tech. casualties". This leaves him, like a few others in our group, looking for a new position in the computer field.

Anyhow, we hope to keep Dave here in the Twin Cities to take advantage of the various talents he brings to the chapter and to the district. Best of luck on that job search, Dave. We want you with us at Montreal and far beyond!



## Thanks a Lutz!

We all owe a debt of gratitude to **Jim Lutz** who has taken care of repairs to our riser trailer. It is easy to take this for granted. Yet, like our personal vehicles, things need to be maintained and repaired. Jim has done that, even repaired a hole in the side that had been created by the banging of the risers.

So, next time you see him, say "Thanks, Jim!"



*Jim Lutz taking pride in his work.*

## Garage Sale

The brainchild of **Corey Hanson**, and hosted by **Maria** and **Kent Erlandson**, there will be a garage sale to benefit GNU on Saturday May 3. This will draw a huge crowd since it is part of a large neighborhood sale.

If 40 members contribute \$25.00 worth of items, we have then achieved \$1,000 for the treasury. We should be able to do even better. Most of us have things that we hang on to and never will use again. (My aunt used to say that if I have not used it in two years, I am not going to use it in the next two years!) Why not contribute your "good trash" so it can become somebody else's treasure?

So far, our "star-behind-the-scenes-everything-GNU" **Jim Lutz**, is the top contributor for this event, having driven a flat bed trailer full of everything imaginable. Other items already on the scene are a brand new toilet, dishes, toys, books, decorative items, brand new clothes, Holiday lights, and the list goes on.

While the "deadline" for bringing your (pre-priced) items to the Erlandson's Eden Prairie home is past, we suggest that if you have some choice items, please call to arrange delivery to them ASAP.



*Give me a good "Oooo"*



*Tony Blackwood rehearsing the solo in one of our gospel numbers, Swing Down Chariot.*



### Performance at St. Philips

By now the GNU have become very well known at **St. Philips Lutheran Church** in Plymouth, having been invited to sing there on several occasions. Most recently we performed at a Thursday Lenten service. What an inspirational hour it was, with congregational singing, a lovely flute solo and several of our Gospel numbers. At the end of the service, the congregation gave an extended and heartfelt round of applause giving us hope that we will once again be invited back.



### Random Acts of Choreography!



*Blow that horn*



*Learnin' those fancy steps*



*The front row 'Workin' It'*



*Where's my hat?*







### Riding the Rails

We have riser rails! Finally our investment in safety has arrived in the form of back & side riser rails. Hopefully no more guys will suffer the unfortunate accidents of two of our long time members. Thanks **Kent**, and others, for the help on this.

### Quartet Division and Prelim Contests

The first weekend in May is the time for Land O' Lakes District International Preliminary Quartet Contest! This year it will be held locally. The contest is designed to "test" quartets for eligibility for the upcoming International Quartet Contest in Montreal in July. It is hoped that we can send several quartets to Montreal this year.

For economy, this is coupled with the 10,000 Lakes Division Quartet & Chorus Contest. So, we will also be hearing choruses from our own 10,000 Lakes Division (Twin Cities area).

The contest site is Armstrong High School in Robbinsdale. The convention hotel is the Kelly Inn in Plymouth. Quartet semi-finals are Friday night beginning at 6:30 PM. The chorus contest is Saturday afternoon at 12:30 PM. The quartet finals (followed by GNU performance) are Saturday evening beginning at 7:00 PM.

All in all, it should be a weekend of lots of great barbershop singing and it's happening right here in the Twin Cities area.



*Steve LaBissoniere and Bob Barnes working hard*

### Coming Events

May 3<sup>rd</sup> - 10,000 Lakes Division Contest  
Garage Sale

May 16-18<sup>th</sup> - Duluth Retreat

May 29<sup>th</sup> - Coaching Session, Joe Connelly

June 14<sup>th</sup> - On to Fame Show

July 5<sup>th</sup> - Montreal Int'l Contest

# GNU Chapter Quartets

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The Roadrunners  
(20 Years ago!)

Contact: Rich Slind, P.O. Box 25257, St. Paul, MN 55125  
E-mail: roadrunners72@juno.com  
Web Site: <http://theroadrunners.home.mindspring.com>

**Before we go....**

*May the Road Rise to Meet You...*



The Great Northern Union Chorus meets every Thursday from 7:00pm to 10:00pm, at the Greater Minneapolis Jewish Community Center, 4330 Cedar Lake Road in St. Louis Park. Diving 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 952-377-8330. "Early-Bird" rehearsals are held at 6:00pm for practicing S.P. moves. 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](http://www.gnunion.com)

