



the north shore harmony rag



Joseph Schlesinger, Third Assistant
Temporary Editor and Royal Keeper
of the Minor Typos

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

Meetings:
7:45 p.m. Wednesdays,
Presbyterian Home,
3131 Simpson St.
(Golf Rd.), Evanston, IL
(Guests are welcome!)

March 2003

27 Members

Volume 31, Issue 3

Please remember: All contestants in the upcoming spring contest must be current members of SPEBSQSA and must be duly registered for the convention—and be able to prove it.

If your membership expiration date is March 31, please make sure your renewal is received at Harmony Hall before you go to contest. Otherwise, we run the risk of being disqualified.

Ron Rank Coming to Coach Us March 26

March 26 is an important night in our preparation for spring contest. That night **Ron Rank**, past Illinois District gold medalist, will visit our rehearsal to coach us. Though Ron is a certified Singing judge, he is qualified to offer guidance in

presentation as well. In order for us to benefit from his expertise, it is important that as much of the competing chorus as possible be present. Let's mark our calendars and plan to arrive promptly at meeting on the 26th.

Just an Observation . . .

Have you noticed the changes on this year's convention registration and housing reservation form? If not, you should be aware that:

- The convention registration fee is now \$25. Registrations postmarked after April 4 will require an additional late fee. That late fee has jumped to \$10. So if you register after April 4, be prepared to pay \$35.
- The room reservation deposit used to be \$15 per room. Not anymore. Now it's the room rate for a single night: \$82 if you're staying at the Pere Marquette, \$89 if you choose the Holiday Inn City Centre. As in the past, your deposit will be credited to your final bill when you check out.

Guest Night Scheduled May 7

Our chapter's first formal "Guest Night" of the year is set for May 7. While we encourage you to bring guests to meeting any Wednesday night, if you're waiting for a special occasion, this is it. In the meantime, please give names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails of prospective guests to Membership Veep **Noble LeHew**.

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You're Invited to a Harmony Celebration!

SPEBSQSA turns 65 on April 11 of this year, and that's cause for celebration up the lake in Kenosha.

Our Society and various civic organizations in Kenosha are planning a two-day shindig April 11 and 12, and Barbershoppers all over the country are invited to share the fun.

Here's what the festivities will include:

Friday, April 11

Tour of Harmony Hall
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
6315 Third Ave., Kenosha
Free; open to the public

Bus tour of Kenosha sites
12:30-4 p.m.
\$15

SPEBSQSA Birthday Social
4-5 p.m.
Best Western Executive Inn
7220 122nd Ave. (I-94 and
Hwy. 50—Exit 344), Kenosha
Free; open to the public

(continued on page 6—
see CELEBRATION)

CHAPTER OFFICERS

President:
Joseph Schlesinger — 847/328-0921
V.P. Membership & Chapter Development:
Noble LeHew — 847/966-5412
V.P. Music & Performance:
Bill Remien — 847/864-8753
Secretary: Phil Schwimmer — 847/298-4283
Treasurer: Edward Price — 773/334-1419
Immediate Past President:
Bill Remien — 847/864-8753

Bulletin Editor:
Joseph Schlesinger
1570 Oak Avenue, #416
Evanston, IL 60201
phone: 847/328-0921
e-mail: zinger99@juno.com
(backup: schlesmail@yahoo.com)

Rag Deadline: Second Wednesday of Every Month

Board Meetings: First Sunday of each month.
The March Board meeting will be held at 7:45 p.m.
Sunday, April 6, at **Phil Schwimmer's** home, 3432
Salem Walk E., #AG, Northbrook. All chapter
members are welcome.

Chapter Web site: www.nsn.org/evkhome/bflat
(Current Rag issue is also on the Web site!)

February/March Guests

Bill Woodring (Salem, Ohio Chapter)

Harmony Days Committee Update

At their March 9 meeting, members of the Evanston Harmony Days committee agreed that the event should coincide with Arts Week in Evanston (Oct. 11-19), encompass all styles of a cappella harmony, and welcome the participation of all choral and vocal groups connected with Evanston. A variety of activities are being considered, including public performances, open houses, musical workshops, and community sing-alongs. **Rick Prieto** is the committee chairman.

“From the Top”

Same message as last year, only with different numbers to plug in: The magic number to beat on April 26 is **641**. That was our total score last spring, when we won “Most Improved Chorus” with our sixth-place performance.

Can we make top five this time? Not impossible, but it requires diligent review of

technical advice, hard work, and focused attention, especially while we’re working together.

Can we repeat as most improved chorus? I suggest we focus on making the top five—if we do that and end up as most improved chorus, so be it. Fifth-place chorus last spring ended up

COMING EVENTS

North Shore Chapter:
Every Wednesday night—**Informal Guest Night—BRINGASINGA!**
Wed., 3/26—**Chorus Coaching Session with Ron Rank**—Starts PROMPTLY at 7:45.
Fri., 4/11—**Happy 65th Birthday, SPEBSQSA!** (We ain’t ready to retire!)
Tue. 4/15—**Possible rescheduled meeting night because Passover starts Wed., 4/16**—Please keep Tuesday evening open; we’ll let you know what develops.
Fri., 4/25-Sun., 4/27—**Illinois District Spring Convention**—Peoria.
Fri., 5/7—**Guest Night/Open House.**
Sat., 5/17—**Potential Shoreliner Chorus Performance at 13th Annual Skokie Festival of Cultures**—some time in the afternoon at Oakton Park, Skokie.
Wed., 5/28—**Interchapter Bash with Arlington Heights and Chicago Metro Chapters**—tentative date.
Sat., 7/19 and Sun., 7/20—**Evanston Ethnic Arts Festival**—Dawes Park, Evanston.
Sat., 10/11-Sun., 10/19—**Arts Week in Evanston.**

North Shore Chapter Web Site:
www.nsn.org/evkhome/bflat

Elsewhere:
Fri., 3/21—**Interstate Woodshed**—8 p.m. (dinner at 6:30) at American Legion Hall, Hwy. B, Silver Lake, Wis. All Barber-shoppers invited; \$5 donation requested to defray expenses. For information, call the hall at 262/889-8255 or **Gerry Carroll** at 847/678-0092.
Fri., 4/11 and Sat., 4/12—**Harmony Celebration**—See story on page 1.

Barbershop Harmony Chicagoland Web site:
www.bbs.singer.as

with 664 points; highest score in the contest was 767. I don’t know about you, but I’d be happy if we could beat our total from last year by a healthy margin. We all know what to do, so let’s do it—and have fun at the same time!

—**Joseph Schlesinger**
President

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

North Shore Chapter of SPEBSQSA is a group of men of all ages who enjoy gathering in fellowship to sing in the four-part, a cappella, close harmony style known as barbershop. As we participate in our varied social and musical activities, including both choral and quartet singing, our members can develop their vocal skills and their appreciation of the rich heritage of American song, which we share with our community through performances in a variety of settings.

The craft article on pages 3 and 4 was given to us by Dr. Chris Wethered of Boise, Ida. Chapter, with his permission to reprint the entire series in the *Rag*. Chris is a speech-language pathologist, and in these articles he has applied the principles he has learned to singing technique. We hope space will permit us to print the remainder of the series in the April issue, so that you will have all the parts prior to spring contest.

Continually Improving Our Performance—Part One

—Dr. Chris Wethered (Boise, Ida. Chapter)

In order to continue receiving the “Most Improved Chorus” award, we need to continue improving. The series of articles that follow present information on how our singing mechanism operates. These articles are intended to provide the chorus with a common vocabulary and an understanding of what we should all be doing to produce the same quality sounds.

While you may have heard some of these things before, it is time for all members to revisit and practice correct use of their vocal mechanism. We can all stand to review basic singing skills. By hearing them again and from a different perspective, we can bring them more under our consistent control.

The articles are organized around five sets of singing skills. Each article provides information on the operation of your lungs, vocal cords and vocal tract:

Increase Lung Volume

- increase usable lung capacity
- hold notes longer
- take fewer breaths

Breathe Silently

- breathe silently (constriction free breathing)
- employ staggered breathing within sections
- breathe invisibly (no gasp, breath reset or shoulder movement)

Control Your Sound

- develop more control over your vocal folds
- ring chords more consistently
- (matching vowels, consonant combinations and word pronunciation)

Convey the Message of the Song Through Controlled Vocal Quality/Sounds

- choose appropriate volumes for your interpretation
- investigate the spectrum of bright to breathy sounds

Enrich Your Sound

- employ your resonance chambers to enrich your vocal quality

You will have to practice the skills and techniques as an individual chorus member.

As a chorus you will have to incorporate them into rehearsals and specific song interpretations. It is only through using these skills of good singing, that they will become automatic singing habits.

I. INCREASE LUNG VOLUME—use diaphragm and chest (not shoulders)

Hold a note/vowel using abdominal-diaphragm support only. Time and note the duration of the note.

Write your time here:

If you were going to drive across country, it would not make much sense to fill your tank to only the 1/3 level at each gas-up. That is what you are doing when you only use abdominal air support.

Diaphragmatic breathing is an automatic process. Muscle tension pulls the diaphragm down from, and elasticity returns it to, the elevated position. This action of the diaphragm is responsible for 29% to 63% of your lung capacity for air exchange. When the diaphragm moves down, it produces a negative pressure in the lungs (chest cavity).

This is more easily seen in the operation of a syringe, concertina or set of bellows. As these instruments (and the lungs) operate, they produce a negative pressure and as a result, air rushes in to equalize the pressure.

By relaxing the gut (allowing the it to be displaced by the lowering diaphragm) you can draw in more air. By controlled progressive tensing of the gut, you can then squeeze out that air (just as with the bellows, concertina and syringe). Think of the Heimlich Maneuver; by greater compression of the gut you can exhale more air.

You need to elevate your ribs to further increase the internal space of the chest cavity, and hence the negative pressure within. This increases the volume of air that you can exchange. In filling the lungs more fully, you have more air to support singing. As a result, you can sustain singing for a longer period, require fewer breaths and provide better support for singing quality and volume.

The ribs are basically hinged at the spine. As they rise, the internal space (left to right and front to back) is increased. This increased space produces the added, available air capacity.

Experiment:

Stand with your arms hanging and hands clasped. Now with your elbows anchored at your sides, raise your clasped hands.

(continued on page 4—see CRAFT)

Craft (continued from page 3)

When they are straight in front of you, note how the space between your hands and your body has increased. This is basically the action of the ribs. This experiment illustrates how rib elevation can radically increase the volume of the lung cavity, and as a result, the amount of additional air drawn in through rib elevation.

The ribs raise by contraction of the intercostals and other associated muscles. With graded relaxation of this muscular tension, the ribs return to their resting position. This return is mediated by elastic and gravitational forces.

The reason that barbershoppers aren't taught to use this valuable available air space, is that their coaches don't think that barbershoppers can't do this without bobbing their shoulders up and down.

Now hold the note/vowel again. This time use both the abdomen/diaphragm and ribs.

Time, record your duration and compare it to your first attempt.

Write your time here:

II. BREATHING SILENTLY

Think of a garden hose, quietly channeling water to your garden. Now recall what happens when you step on, or kink, the hose; the water makes noise. The constriction in the hose produces turbulence in the flowing water. This turbulence makes the noise.

The principles in this hydraulic example apply to our aerodynamic system. In our airway, as with the garden hose, we breathe in and out silently. It is the constriction at the lips, tongue, throat, soft palate and vocal folds which produce turbulence and result in varied sounds. We employ this principle on exhalation, to produce voice and to shape that voice into speech sounds.

The problem in singing, is that if we do not remove these constrictions on inhalation, they continue to produce noise. These inhalation noises distract an audience and detract from the chorus' artistic delivery.

Silent breathing will contribute to our goal of continual improvement. It needs to be a chorus skill acquired and consistently used by *all* members.

Discourage noisy breathing just as you would flat notes.

As mentioned in the past, breathing is a passive process. Raising the ribs will automatically draw the air into your lungs. Some barbershoppers

act as if they think that they can take in more air, faster, if they "suck it in." In fact, this puckered "sucking" action restricts the amount of air that can be taken in and constricts the airway, producing noise.

Solution: deconstrict your airway on inhalation and the air will automatically and silently rush in to equalize the negative pressure in your lungs. To minimize constriction, inhale using a vowel position and rib elevation.

As an Individual: Sing Like the Accordion

As an individual, this silent breathing is like an accordion; silent inhalation (recharging the lungs) and musical exhalation. Many groups sing with set breathing points, like a large accordion.

If you want to make a "physical restatement" or "energy step," it is far better to do it at an appropriate point in the song, not just when you happen to inhale. Aside from a specific song interpretation, there is no reason to focus the audience's attention on when we inhale.

As a Group: Sing Like the Bagpipes.

If the chorus uses staggered breathing (within sections); they can function like the bagpipes, recharging their collective lung while still singing.

Using the above suggestions, a chorus can develop the appearance of:

- breathless singing (constriction-free breathing)
- seamless singing (staggered breathing within sections)
- invisible breathing (no breath reset or shoulder movement)

DO:

1. Do open your lips and make a vowel position (deconstrict)
2. Do raise your ribs
3. Do relax your gut

DON'T:

1. Don't suck in the air
2. Don't raise your shoulders on inhalation
3. Don't reset with each breath

Have the whole chorus practice breathing silently using the above DOs and DON'Ts, singing breathlessly, with staggered breathing, and no physical evidence of breathing.

—from Boise, Ida. Chapter *Valley Vibes*
Win Kircher, Scott Gartner,
 and **Dan Morrison,** editors

Last spring the judges said we need to . . .

- Put more driving rhythm in uptunes.
- Show consistent level of facial commitment to each song's message.
- Add more "dynamic tension" in vocal support and stance.
- Improve sectional unity—blend voices more closely.
- Complete ends of phrases and eliminate white spaces.
- Add warm air to vocal quality.
- Sing sounds, not words.
- Maintain continuous breath pressure.
- Create more dynamic contrast throughout phrases.

“Harmony,
Balance,
Rhythm.
There you
have it.
That’s what
life is all
about.”

—George Y.
Pocock

O. C. Cash: The Early Years

—Idress Cash

(April 11 is SPEBSQSA’s 65th birthday. You’ve all probably heard or read anecdotes about the father of our Society. Here’s another one.)

Idress Cash was the sister of SPEBSQSA co-founder **Owen C. Cash**. At the request of editor **Ron Dudley**, she wrote this article especially for the *Gateway Gazette*. It appeared originally in the January and June/July 1983 issues. This was seen in the Fullerton, Calif. Chapter’s *Clippin’s*, **Dick Cote**, editor.

I was not aware of barber-shopping until the big explosion of 1938. [My brother] Owen worked in a barber shop when he was a youngster, and I suppose he encountered the craft there.

At home, my mother was always singing—hymns, ballads, **Stephen Foster** songs—while she was in the garden or busy with housework. Mother and Dad attended singing school when they were young and we had the book they used. Dad used to sit in a big chair with the book and we would look over his shoulder and sing. But not often. Dad’s time to sing was Sunday mornings. He used to get up singing some favorite hymn—very loud.

When we were teenagers, groups of us used to spend a lot of time singing around a piano. Owen was the leader in our crowd. He managed to get songs from the current New York musicals shows. He also visited with friends in neighboring towns. Then Owen learned to play the cornet and played all the Sousa marches. I played all the accompaniments and we made a lot of noise.

Then he switched to the trombone and more noise. Then he took violin lessons and explored the world of classical music for a time. In the latter part of World War I, Owen was in Officers’ Training School. I have no idea whether he sang barber-shop style there; he could have. It is evident he knew the craft so surely he must have practiced it.

One Friday afternoon in the spring of 1938, I stopped by my brother’s house. The table was set for 12 and he told me he had invited some men friends for a stag dinner; they wanted to see his new house. He was anxious to show them the club room which was decorated according to his plan. It was in that room that the seed was sown that grew into the Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber-shop Quartet Singing in the United States (SPPEB-QSUS). The men had such a good time, someone suggested that they meet again, and that was the meeting on the roof garden of the hotel.

When the story appeared in newspapers all over the USA, men began writing letters to Owen wanting to know how they could be part of such a group. When Owen and Mr. Hall met in the Muehlebach Hotel and talked it over, the answer became clear: incorporate. That provided a home for the many “orphans” out there crying to be adopted. The movement was really born that night when 27 men sang under the stars on a hotel roof.

—by way of Lake County, Ind. Chapter *Overtones*
Al Ries, editor
and Oak Lawn Chapter
Woodshedder
Pat Conran, editor

‘Liner Notes

- ♪ The reason we haven’t seen **Scott Beatty** at meetings for the last few months is that he’s traveling overseas extensively on business, mostly in the United Kingdom. He sends his regards, says he misses singing with us, and looks forward to being with us again before too long.
- ♪ We talked recently with former member **Rod Miranne**. Rod and his wife Kris have moved to the Detroit area, where he’s a landscape architect with an architectural firm.
- ♪ On a sad note, we learned of the recent death of former chapter member **Don Wee**. Don was briefly a member of our group in the early 1980s.

an
Irish
prayer



*May those that love us,
love us;
And those that don’t
love us,
May God turn their hearts;
And if He doesn’t turn
their hearts,
May He turn their ankles
So we’ll know them
by their limping.*



This probably would have been more timely had the *Rag* been issued on March 17, rather than March 19. Oh well, we’re just in time for St. Joseph’s day—too bad it wasn’t named after your editor. (Wasn’t it named after the patron saint of children’s aspirin?)

P. O. Box 741
Evanston, IL 60204

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“BITE THE
BIG ONE”
means “bite
the apple”
when singing
an “ah” vowel.
(What did *you*
think it
meant?)
Let’s
remember this
easy rule for
singing with
forward
placement.

Celebration (Continued from page 1)

“Cat on a Hot Tin Roof” fea-
turing **Lakeside Players**
8 p.m.
Rhode Opera House
515 56th St., Kenosha
\$10

Saturday, April 12

Tour of Harmony Hall
9 a.m.-12 noon
6315 Third Ave, Kenosha
Free; open to the public

Harmony Celebration
Concert
2 p.m.
Reuther H.S. Auditorium
913 57th St., Kenosha
Featuring **Power Play**
(current International Fifth
Place Medalists), **New Tra-
dition Chorus** (2001 Inter-
national Champion Chorus),
**Tremper/Bradford
Madrigal Singers**

\$20 (reserved), \$15 (general
admission), \$12 (students
and senior citizens

Celebration Banquet
5 p.m.
Parkway Chateau
12304 75th St. (I-94 and Hwy.
50—Exit 344), Kenosha
Featuring: **Power Play,**
Tremper Golden Strings
\$30

SPEBSQSA Social
8 p.m.
Best Western Executive Inn
7220 122nd Ave. (I-94 and
Hwy. 50—Exit 344), Kenosha
Free; open to the public

Proceeds will benefit Har-
mony Foundation and
KAFASI (Kenosha Area
Family & Aging Services,
Inc.). For ticket information,
call Diana at 262/658-0237.

Wanna Hear Boston Common in Concert?

If you’ve always wanted to
hear the legendary 1980 In-
ternational Champion quartet
Boston Common perform
live, reserve Saturday, June 7
for a musical treat.

That day, South Bend-
Mishawaka, Ind. Chapter
will present Boston Com-
mon on their annual spring
show at 2 and 7:30 p.m.
(EDT), at Clay High School
in South Bend.

For more information, visit the
chapter’s Web site at
www.thevalleyaires.org, see
page 15 of your January/
February *Attacks and Re-
leases*, or call the Valleyaires
hotline at 574/258-7400.