



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS



HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION - LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

Volume 11 #2

GNUsNews

May 2006

Collegiate Concert begins GNU Concert Season



On March 18th, The Great Northern Union began its 2006 concert season with a joint concert featuring the Metropolitan Boys Choir under the direction of Bea Hasselmann and The Luther College Norsemen directed by Dr. Timothy Peter. The concert was held in the beautiful spacious sanctuary of St Andrew's Church in Mahtomedi, Mn. Our concert series continues on June 24th with our annual On to Fame: Parade of International Competitors Concert. The program will feature choruses and quartets from both the Barbershop Harmony Society and Sweet Adelines International who are headed for international competition. The concert will be held at the Eden Prairie Performing Arts Center. More about our collegiate concert on page 3.

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As I sat down to stare at my blank computer screen in hopes of coming up with yet another thrilling newsletter article, I decided to pull out my column from last year at this time. After reading it I found myself wanting to write an almost converse message for this year. Well not exactly. Let me explain.

In last year's article I spoke of the balance between the importance of shows and contest. I stressed that we are no longer a 2-song chorus and with our new "concert season" we needed to think of International as a highlight but not the highlight of the year. We needed to ride the wave of energy from our contest right into the next show and keep all of our songs at a high level. Okay, so how did we do? Fantastic! This was our best year ever in terms of quality shows, big audiences, and rave reviews on our entire repertoire! You definitely took it to heart and we have proven that we are top notch in every aspect of performance, not just contest. Oh, and I almost forgot, WE WON A MEDAL!

This year I want to charge you with the same goal, a year filled with excellence. But, I also want you to be careful not to diminish the importance of our contest in Indianapolis. Why do we compete at International? Is it to sharpen our skills, enjoy camaraderie with other barbershoppers, have a nice vacation, get feedback from judges, etc? Nope. Brace yourself. I compete because I want to win! If we are going to succeed at contest we need to think and act like champions. Mark Hale has said numerous times that we need to rehearse like we think we can win. I know I am a broken record but at our level, we are all aware of the fundamental skills, now it's about work ethic and attitude. Work like a champ and you'll be one. Judging by our last three years of placement, I think we're on the right track 9th, 7th, 5th, _____. It's up to you to fill in the blank.



Pete Benson

Collegiate Concert continued from page 1



In addition to several mass choir pieces, each group had their own program to present. Luther College also brought along a couple of smaller ensembles. The next day all three choruses joined together to sing the National Anthem at the Minnesota Timberwolves basket ball game.



Four Hilltop Quartets are headed to District

The Great Northern Union was represented by several quartets at the 10,000 Lakes Division contest in Faribault on March 17th. Hilltop quartets competing were **Bandwagon**, **Gold Rush** and **Presto**. Bandwagon and Gold Rush qualified to go on to the next level of competition, the district contest in Rochester in the fall. **Aarps-a-Chord** qualified at another division contest. **Double Down** went up to Fargo in May and qualified for District.



Quartet News



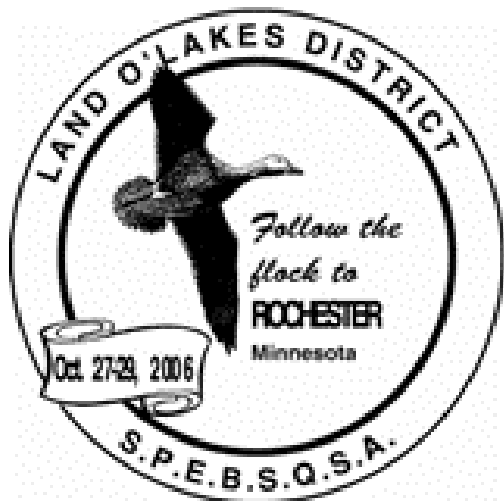
Gold Rush
Steve Nolte (tenor), Cleon Wahlin (lead)
Steve Hardy (bari), Steve Anderson (bass)



Bandwagon
Keith Olson (tenor), Sam Sather (lead)
Jim Larson (bari), Jim Barloon (bass)



Aarps-A-Chord
Dick Plaisted (tenor), Gary Jacobson (lead)
Bob Griffith (bari), Lance Johnson (bass)



Double Down
Chuck McKown (tenor), Ken Kiehne (lead)
Nathan Schmidt (bari), Rick Hurd (bass)

More Quartet news.....



Gold Rush was proud to be asked to sing at the marriage of Sam and Damon Gates. They sang a song during the ceremony and then at the reception. One thing I am sure they will never forget is singing "The Way You Look Tonight" for the bride in her dressing room.



In another contest, the International Prelims, **Quest** (above) qualified for the International contest to be held in Indianapolis this July.



After Midnight, the current LOL District Champion quartet was featured on the "Daily Voices Wave Project" program on KFAI radio, 90.3 FM Minneapolis / 106.7 FM St. Paul, at 3:00 pm Sunday May 7th. This program is devoted exclusively to top a cappella vocalists. For a closer look at KFAI radio, go to: <http://www.kfai.org/>

David, Tom, Steve, & Jim
After Midnight quartet
2005 LOL District Champs



Congratulations to all LOL and GNU qualifying quartets!! Just an FYI - Don't forget to add one more feather in your cap to claim yet another qualifying quartet. Please note in the official posted scoring of qualifying quartet info that **Syd Libsack**, bass for **Storm Front** (pictured above and currently #10) continues to list GNU as his chapter. So, LOL and GNU should be proud to claim one more qualifying quartet!! Just a quick note from a proud Dad.

Steve Libsack

PS - Hope to see you all in Indy. I'll be competing with Sound Of the Rockies again this year.

Remembering Jim Lutz

Jim Lutz was laid to rest in March after dying from complications surrounding lung disease. The GNU was proud to be asked to sing at Jim's funeral.

A long time barbershopper with the Minnetonka Clippers and the Great Northern Union, Jim did a lot for our chapter. Most notably, taking care of our annual spring retreat accommodations and the chorus trailer.

He did a great job with the trailer including getting TGI Fridays Restuarant to sponser the paint job. His picture was imposed on the trailer as a joke.



The following was reprinted from an earlier **GNUsNews**.

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.



HOBBIES, AMATEURS, AND FUNDRAISING

by Lee Roth, VP Membership

Barbershop singers are fond of referring to singing as their "hobby" or referring to themselves as "amateur singers." There are about 800 chapters of barbershop singers in the country. My guess is that about 80 or so of these chapters are populated with men who have a sincere interest in singing as well as they can. They engage in competition, they study, they practice, and they put a lot of time into their barbershop activity. Others like to enjoy barbershop singing, but with various levels of commitment, ranging from some contest participation to social & family performing.

Each of these groups have different goals and funding needs. Some do well on the dues and an annual show for themselves and their friends. Others seek a larger budget that will cover the cost of coaching, learning apes, and support for their educational and improvement programs.

The top ten percent come close to being obsessed with improvement. They regularly screen new singers and have self-recording and audition programs in place to continuously improve the quality of their members' personal singing. Then this top group refers to themselves as engaging in a "hobby," or allow themselves to be called "amateurs," they may do a disservice to their funding opportunities. Grant givers do not fund hobbies nor do they seek to support amateurs. Take a minute to look at the words used.

Amateur

The dictionary says that an amateur is "Somebody who does or takes part in something for pleasure rather than for pay." And, "Somebody who loves or is greatly interested in something." I take pleasure in singing with the chorus and with my quartet. I work hard to improve my singing. I invest a lot of time in the activity. I spend money on obtaining help in my effort to improve. But my dictionary also says that an amateur is "Somebody who has only limited skill in, or knowledge of, an activity." I'm afraid that grant givers latch on to this alternate definition and put all who sing barbershop music into this category and don't consider the ability of the amateur (Tiger Woods was once an amateur golfer).

Hobby

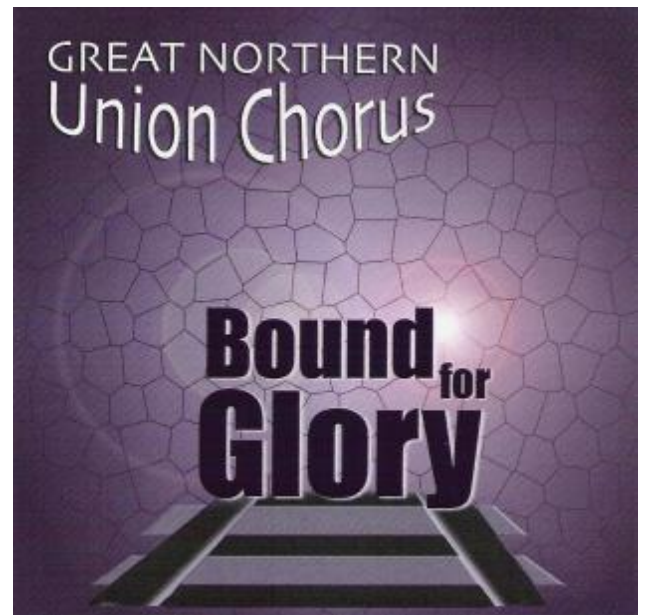
We also have a tendency to refer to our activity as a hobby. As long as the definition in mind is "an activity engaged in for pleasure and relaxation during spare time," then we are probably engaged in a hobby. Many of our hard-working top singers get paid. Are they no longer amateurs? Our chorus and quartets are paid for major public performances to support our cost structure. The better a group sings the more they are considered

to be worth. So are they engaged in a hobby? Are they professionals or amateurs? Perhaps until grant givers and other supporters of the arts understand that we are serious about what we do, we should drop the words "hobby" and "amateur" from our barbershop vocabulary and tell people that we are members of an arts organization. Rather than calling ourselves amateurs and hobbyists, we should refer to ourselves as artists and performers.



Upcoming Events

- May 20 Mark Hale Coaching*
- June 24 On To Fame Show*
- June 25 Twins Day at the Dome*
- July 7 International Contest*
- July 18 Como Park Performance*



It pays to have your chorus picture hanging in the office.

On Wednesday, March 29, John Kleiber joined three co-workers at Honeywell Solid State Electronics Center to participate in a Karaoke Contest fund raiser for Minnesota Food Share. John claims it was a thinly disguised recruiting attempt to convince his buddies to join the GNU Chorus.



The truth of the matter is that Wayne Orf (yes, Judd Orff, Wayne's got only one "f"), Karaoke Contest committee member, had seen John's GNU photos on his office wall, so he knew John is a singer. Wayne asked John to join the contest, but John told Wayne he can only sing with three other men. John was hoping Wayne would go away and leave him alone, being too shy & retiring for something as nerve wracking as singing a karaoke solo.

Wayne thought better of it and came back a couple of days later with two more men, Dave Blankers and Pat Karn, and a quartet was born! Since all four guys work in different functional departments, the name "Mixed Functions" was chosen. Everyone brought in various pieces of music and a one verse "Love Me Tender" and the pole-cat "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" were chosen to be the competition songs. Matching socks were NOT purchased, but "almost uniform" khaki's and solid color shirts were the costume du jour.

The butterflies were fluttering as the quartet sat through the first seven of 11 competitors. The winged beasts must have been flying in "formation" since Mixed Functions took second place in the contest! It was a great time for all. The scoring was based both on donation jars for each competitor and balloting by the audience. The donations totaled over \$1500 for Food Share!

The foursome has already agreed to do this again next year. As for the barbershop recruiting - well, time will tell if the bug has bitten hard enough for Wayne, Dave and

Pat. They're all very active in their church choirs and say they don't have that extra evening to spare for GNU...just yet!

Cheers,

John K

Barbershop on iTunes

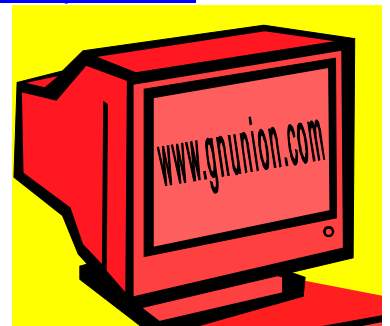
As an iTunes user, I subscribe to various podcasts. One in particular may be of interest to you. It's called 4-Cast, "the only podcast dedicated strictly to Barbershop Harmony." You can subscribe to it for free in iTunes, or just visit their website at <http://4-cast.tv/podcasts.htm> and download archived shows in mp3 format. One of the recent shows

<http://www.4-cast.tv/casts/pc10.htm> featured interviews with senior quartet Antiques Roadshow and international champs Realtime.

If you have time, you may want to check it out.

-Lee Shelton

Also check out the newly re-vamped GNU website at www.GNUNION.com



GNU Concert Season continues.....

On To Fame featuring Int'l quartet and chorus competitors
June 24, 7PM at the E.P. Performing Arts Center in Eden Prairie
 \$15 at the door, \$12 in advance

Classic A Cappella featuring Cantus
September 16, 7:30PM at St. Olaf Catholic Church in Mpls
 \$20 at the door, \$16 in advance

Season Finale (Vocal Spectrum)
November 18, 1PM & 7PM at BGH, Bethel U in St. Paul
 Reserved Seating (\$10 - \$30,... 20% discount for advance purchase)



Members:

Get to know "em

also sang with GNU for a time, commuting all those hours for some quality time with us and his son. Earlier, "Dad" was also a member of the Wisconsin quartet, **"Woodwins."**

Steve says he had a very demanding high school vocal director, who held to a high standard of musical excellence. He says his high school experience was not always easy, but it was definitely worth it! Steve goes so far as to say that we would find our best future members from young men who have worked with directors who demanded much of their students.



Some fine quartets with whom Steve has performed include **"Prime Time"**, with the Halvorson brothers and Bob Albachten; **"APEX"** with Keith Olson, Jim Larson, and Tom Puent, and now, he is with the current Land O Lakes District Champion quartet, **"After Midnight"**. (This guy keeps some good company!)

Steve cites two specific peak moments with the GNU: One was right after he attended his first rehearsal, and then went to the District convention. "WOW" he exclaimed as GNU took 1st place. Apparently he was hooked from then on. The other real high for him was participating in the big reunion chorus in Fargo.

Steve is mostly an Upper Midwesterner, having lived near Madison, Wisconsin, then in the greater Twin Cities area for most of his adult life. The exception was three years in Atlanta, Georgia. He lives with his long time partner, Brian, in a home they built a few years ago in Prescott, Wisconsin.

Steve is a Pediatrics Intensive Care Registered Nurse at Fairview University Children's Hospital in Minneapolis. He also holds a degree in Genetics and Cell Biology. Now, he is in graduate school to be a Nurse Practitioner,

Get to know

Steve McDonald

Great Northern Union Chorus front row bass, **Steve McDonald**, has been a member since 1989, when he joined GNU with the help of Bob Dowma. Steve's dad was also a barbershopper at Madison, Wisconsin; and he

also in Pediatrics at the University. You might have seen his photo in the paper in an advertisement for the University Medical system. (I am sure that Dad-and Mom-are proud.)

His advice to go find men who have been schooled by the best directors is up to all of us to follow. Who do you know who performed in a top high school or college vocal organization? Give them a call! Invite them to see if we can fill a need for them to continue what they have already known to be a satisfying avocation: performing with excellence.

Meet Tony Blackwood

Tony Blackwood is a fine young front row lead with our chorus. He has quite the flair for music and for theater arts, as you will soon see. Many of you know, he also sings in 2003 LOL District Champion quartet, **"Nouveau"**. He had known of the chorus for many years while he was a student at Northwestern College in Roseville, and attended several shows at Maranatha Hall there. Eventually he joined us in 1998. He loved singing the tags after rehearsal in those early years!



Tony grew up in Dassell, Minnesota. He now lives in Woodbury with his wife, Angela, and "wild and crazy dog, Tucker". He works part time out there at The Hartford Insurance; and just finished schooling to become a Private Investigator in Wisconsin. He met Angela as a result of this hobby. She is in Valley de Croix Chorus, and is in a quartet named **"Odyssey"**. (He knows how to pick 'em!)

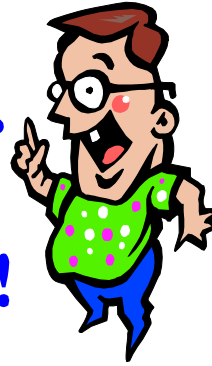
While in high school, Tony was in every choir and music activity that time allowed. Also, while growing up, he along with his brother and Dad sang in the church choir. He was active in theater in high school and beyond, having performed in school productions, community productions, North Star Opera, Refreshment Committee Theater Company of St. Paul; and Tony even founded "Nepenthe" theater group before his membership in GNU.

Some of Tony's contributions to the chorus have been Riser Committee, Vice President of Membership, and Lead Section Leader. Currently, he is secretary for the Land O' Lakes District Association of District Champions (ADC).



Jared Hoke (Bass)
Marine on St Croix, Mn

Quickly
meet our
New
members!



Doug Klemz (Lead)
Blane, Mn



Jeff Goenner (Bari)
Sauk Rapids, Mn



Doug Peterson (Bari)
St Peter, Mn



Andrew Ringham (Bari)
Minneapolis, Mn



Logan Tjossem (Bass)
Spring Valley, Mn



The meeting was held on April 4 at the home of Eric Dove.

The chapter currently has 118 members; dual memberships are being applied for, according to protocol, in a few cases.

There have been 30 visitors to rehearsal nights; with 5 new members and 8 potential candidates. It is estimated that about 85 will sing at International.

Plans are underway for the May 21 "retreat activity day". This will take the place of the Duluth retreat.

Additional songs will be built into the repertoire, to be performed perhaps as soon as September.

We are planning on auditions for the 3rd Thursday of each month. Expectations for this plan should be given to a visitor on his first visit.

Plans are underway to have a recording session on the day of the "On To Fame" show. The goal is to make a new recording track, or two, every six months; and a full CD every two years.

The marketing team under the temporary leadership of Marty Monson is planning several events for 2007 and even 2008. These are for April, June, September, and November. A 2007 highlight will be GNU headlining the Madison, Wisconsin, annual show in April. Performance fee and hotel are arranged.

Fund raising from members and sponsors is also ongoing, with a target finish date of the May retreat. Getting these moneys will pave the way for additional grant applications.

A full report of any meeting is available to any member upon request.



Tag Contest Results

Your top three latest and greatest tag writers.

After a several months long opening for people to submit their entry, over 60 people submitted their own original tag for entry into the Society's first-ever Tag Contest. To keep the writers of each tag unknown during the judging process, each person's name was assigned an ID number which replaced the person's name on the tag.

"There is no shortage of great tag writers out there which made this contest incredibly difficult to judge," said Rick Spencer, Director of Music and Education. "We are so fortunate to have such amazing talents out there in our barbershop world."

And the top three are....

First Place: Nathan Gutschke from Shallowater, Texas garnered top prize (two registrations to Indianapolis) for his soft and tender tag entitled, "This Table Set For Two." This one is going to break your heart.

Second Place: Pete Benson from Faribault, Minnesota finished second with a creative composition called "The Tears Have Left My Eyes." Hold onto your hat when you sing this one! Second place received a \$100 Gift Certificate to the Harmony Marketplace.

Third Place: Lloyd Steinkamp from Santee, California rounded out the top three with a tag about the holiday season called "Isn't This A Lovely Time Of Year?" Third Place received a \$50 Gift Certificate to the Harmony Marketplace.

Look 'em up on the website in Music Lbrary http://www.barbershop.org/web/groups/public/documents/webassets/id_036338.hcst#tags

Each of the top three tags will be taught at this year's International Convention in Indianapolis, IN. Most of the others will be found on the Society website for free use for all singers to enjoy.

THE TEARS HAVE LEFT MY EYES

Words and Music by PETER BENSON Arrangement by PETER BENSON

Tag

Average singers in great choruses

To all GNU singers/champions!!-

The below comments were written by Brian Beck, a good friend and a "ho-hum" musician who just happens to have earned a gold medal singing baritone with the 1973 Dealer's Choice, and another one singing lead with the 1983 Side Street Ramblers, AND.....has finished in the top ten with at least 2 other quartets singing both tenor (Doo-Dads in the sixties) and bass (more recently Saturday Evening Post)!!



Most 'normal' barbershoppers would be thrilled and overjoyed to have accomplished ONE of his above achievements. I know I am!!

Please read his post...and re-read it...and re-read it again. And then BELIEVE IT!! We're no different from that group of guys in Texas, other than they BELIEVE IT! Pete and Scott (and Mark) can do that for us if we heed (think: pay attention and listen) and BELIEVE!

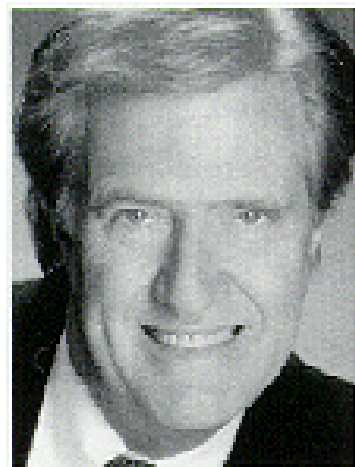
Bob Dowma

- ∅ These are Brian's comments as posted on HarmonetLite@yahoo.com.
- ∅ So, don't tell me that Masters of Harmony and Vocal Majority are full of excellent singers because they're not. They have a few. Every chorus does. But basically, they're full of average singers who are committed to singing excellence as an ensemble and work their butts off to attain it. As the first vocal coach and builder (more or less) of the first VM, with lots of assistance from the Dealer's Choice, I think I can say with some authority that this is correct. We had 12 guys with the vision to make the VM what it became. The first order of business in the audition process was the ability to hear "hawmony," as our Cajun auditioner Charlie White would say. Very close behind that was the willingness to commit to doing anything and everything it took to become what we said we wanted to become. We had, in a nutshell, for the most part, average singers with above-average understanding of the basics of harmony, and WAY-above-average dedication to making it happen. It's still that way.

- ∅ I rotated sections every week for two and a half years; the other DC guys took their section each and every week. I had the entire chorus every week for an hour or so, working on vocal skills. We had a great time, but we worked very hard. I can't think of a person who I didn't think was giving 100% every single time we met. And, believe me, I knew every wart, every flaw in the various guys, but my job was simply to make them the best they could be.
- ∅ We were third at our first International, and most of the guys were disappointed at that. Just shows where their goals were; remember, they were mostly brand-new barbershoppers, so we had to teach them a little about the fraternity part of the game. They just wanted to be the best.
- ∅ It was, and is, all about choices, and the willingness and the desire to work at making those choices a reality. It was, and still is, great fun to be part of the VM.
- ∅ BTW, people ask me what's our "secret." My answer: Director Jim Clancy (pictured below), peer pressure, and the great character and inner drive of each singer in the Vocal Majority. I wouldn't have it any other way.

∅

The Vocal Majority®
★ C H O R U S ★



After Midnight
a barbershop quartet

Tom Marchinsky
952-931-9715
tom_bbshcp@hotmail.com

Bandwagon
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3823 Oak Park Circle SE
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Come along for the ride!
Phone: 507-288-3021 Email: jibbass@juno.com

Ellis Jones, Tenor Bruce Gray, Lead

MAGIC
Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372
bgray@gustavus.edu

Don Miller, Baritone Bill Lydecker, Bass

Please
support
these
GNU
quartets

Gary Jacobson - Lead
Mark Conlon - Tenor
Bob Griffith - Baritone
Lance Johnson - Bass

Aarps-A-Chord

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Quest
BARBERSHOP
QUARTET

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BRENT
TIM

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

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QUARTET

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Dave, Dan, Mike, & Marty

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Special Alliance

GLENN, DAVE, LANCE & DOUG (Barbershop Quartet)

Contactman: DOUG MILLER 4822 Rutledge St.
612-447-8265 Prior Lake, MN 56372

GOLD RUSH
A Land O' Lakes Quartet

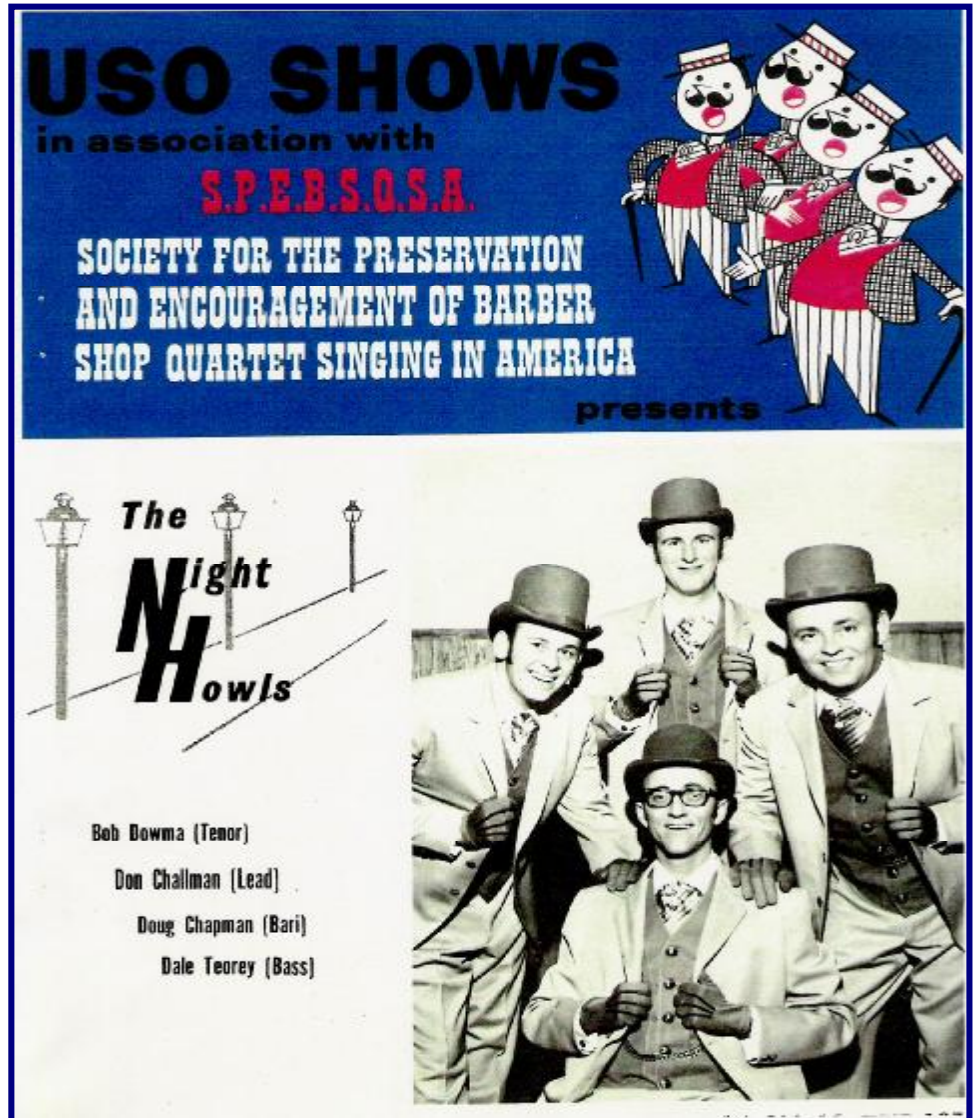
STEVE NOLTE
STEVE ANDERSON

CLEON WAHLIN
STEVE HARDY*

763 757-0581
bari@prettygoodquartet.com

1750 - 131st Ln NW
MPLS, MN 55448

Recognize any of these guys? All are members of the Great Northern Union. And all but one are active members in the chorus. This picture is from when the **Night Howls** entertained the troops overseas in June of 1971.



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