



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



HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION – LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

Vol. 8 - Issue #6

## GNU's NEWS

September 2003

### Two Favorite LOL Quartets Hang Up Their Pitchpipe

#### Excalibur to retire

The 1993 LOL District Champs and perennial International Finalist quartet, Excalibur, will be hanging up their "SWORD" this fall. We will be performing twice at the LOL District Convention in Rochester, MN - once on the Association of District Champions Show, Friday, Oct 24 and once on Saturday, Oct 25 after the LOL District champ is crowned. Our final performance will be on the St. Paul, MN chapter show on Nov. 15, 2003.

All six members of the quartet - original members John Moksnes, Greg Dolphin, Greg Volk and John Korby, plus recent additions Brent Graham and Jay Giallombardo - will be in Rochester. Each version of Excalibur will sing some of your favorite Excalibur songs, and word has it that Greg Volk will be arranging a 6-parter as our "big finish". Cont. on pg. 3

#### For Breakpoint the time has come.

After six years of rehearsals, performances, competition, jubilation and yes, sometimes even disappointment, BreakPoint has decided that the time has come for us to shut things down.

We've had the distinct pleasure of performing on shows in 6 states and 2 Canadian provinces (37 chapter shows, all told), making countless friends during this run. For all of the tremendous support we've been given, our gratitude is immeasurable. Our four consecutive trips to International have given us the opportunity to proudly represent the Land O' Lakes District and our wonderfully supportive chapters. It was particularly gratifying to leave the stage in Montreal to the warm ovation that we did. It's something we'll never forget. Cont. on page 4.



*Excalibur*



*Breakpoint*

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**The Director's Cut****Just Follow the Model**

We had another super-charged session with Mark Hale on Saturday. If you were there, you'll know what I'm talking about, if not, I'll try to elaborate in this article. I would still encourage you to get a copy of the videotape.

I especially liked the way he explained that being tuned into "the model" serves as a way for you to avoid having to think on your feet. In other words, if you have a system, you don't have to over analyze every new word, phrase, or song, but simply keep singing in "the model". Your voice will then fit into and contribute to the ensemble sound.



What is the model? Well, it was refreshing for me to hear that the model had not changed since our last session with Mark. Now we just need to commit to it and TRUST it, so we don't have to hear it all again on his next visit. I think I saw lots of light bulbs going on for many of you and I hope that is true.

**Model:**

- ü Mouth Shape – corners in as in "urge"
- ü As you sing higher, the front opening gets smaller
- ü Focus sound very forward
- ü Turn all word sounds.
- ü Zamboni/Pressure/Gas valve is open all the way.
- ü Articles "a", "the", etc. are neutral "ə"

Please do not assume that since we had a great coaching session and made wonderful sounds that somehow we are now a better chorus for having been there. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way. The concepts will not become part of you without significant commitment and individual practice. Judging from the progress this chorus has made in the last month, I know that you will make it happen. I see great things in the NEAR future!

PETE

## Presidents Corner

Well, the GNU fiscal year starts on August 1<sup>st</sup> and indications are that this will be an uncompromising, hard driving, *"Fun Through Musical Excellence"* year! Pete and the Performance Team have everything on the upswing and we are experiencing something that is very tangibly positive. Our focus when we are on the risers is much better than it has been in the past year or so and will get even better. The faces of old friends have been reported on the risers <wink>.

The third week of August was a big performance week for us. We started out at Como Park by wowing the audience. Although we had a smaller contingent from GNU, we produced a big sound and the crowd showed us their appreciation. What fun! Then we had a wonderful Thursday rehearsal and topped the week with our performance of the National Anthem before 36,000 plus Twins fans at the Metrodome. There was a lot of great feedback from the fans as we took our seats.



Mark Hale came in on Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup> and gave us a fantastic coaching session. Mark's no "smoke blowing" instruction showed us what we have to do at District to sing as well as we are able to sing.

Special thanks go to Theresa and Roger Meyer for an Awards Night banquet that was absolutely wonderful. The program was very well thought out. All attendees were given a sheet of 32 questions. Each question was clue to the name of a member in attendance. It was our charge to get the answers to each question during the social hour. This served as a means to get to know our GNU brothers and their wives and guests more personally. The dinner was delicious (and larger than normal. Thanks Darren.) The installation of officers served to demonstrate that the board and members work as a team for the betterment of the chapter. The Best Improved Face award was given to the person who helped improve all of our faces by taking pictures of us. That was Theresa Meyer. Thanks and congratulations Theresa. The Happy Feet award went to Mister Happy Feet himself, Jeff Aldrich. Way to go Jeff!

For the BOTY award, last years BOTY, Kent Erlandson, asked all members to stand at their tables. He then asked eliminating questions. After each question a number of members would sit down. There were three very worthy candidates standing until the last elimination question was asked. Those left standing until that last question were: Roger Meyer, John Kleiber and John

Babbs. The winner was John Babbs! Congratulations John.

While we are preparing for District competition, we have not lost focus on our upcoming CD and Annual Show. We are learning some beautiful new sacred music for the album. And with Four Voices coming in for the show, the excitement is building. Think ticket sales!

This time period ahead of us is one that should give us an awful lot of fun and satisfaction. Put your seat belts on and get ready for a incredible journey.

**Jim Higgins**

## Excalibur, Cont. from page 1

On the St. Paul show, both Excalibur version 1 (John Moksnes, Greg Dolphin, Greg Volk and John Korby) and Excalibur version 2 (John Moksnes, Greg Dolphin, Brent Graham and John Korby) will be featured. Jay Gialombardo is not able to be at that performance.

It has been quite a ride for us — and we're gonna go out with a bang! We hope you can make plans to come listen to "music on the cutting edge" one more time, either in Rochester (for ticket information, contact Del Ryberg at dryberg@juno.com) or St. Paul (for ticket information, contact Dennis Jacobson at 612-379-3395).

Thank you for all of your support and encouragement over the years — you'll never know how much it was appreciated.

In Harmony,

Excalibur

Moxy, Greg D, Greg V, John, Brent and Jay



## Coming Events

### Saturday, October 25

GNU @ LOL District Competition: Rochester

### Thursday, November 13

Recording Session @ Bethel Benson Great Hall

### Thursday, December 18

Recording Session @ Bethel Benson Great Hall

### Saturday, January 24, '04

Annual Show-Four Voices @ Benson Great Hall



## Breakpoint, Cont. from page 1

We will be singing on the ADC show this fall and singing through the spring show season to satisfy our commitments. If you'd still like to get in on the "BreakPoint farewell tour," we do still have some dates open this spring. The quartet (and Mr. Visa – four consecutive trips to Internationals is killer) would appreciate the opportunity to sing for your chapter one last time.

In a related manner, it's time for the first-ever (I guess nobody ever has more than one) BreakPoint Going Out of Business Recording Sale! We're blowing these recordings out at the low cost of just \$10 for CDs and \$5 for cassettes. And when they're gone, well, you know what that means. This time, it really means they're gone -- forever! Guess we'll be limited to living on in illegally downloaded Internet heaven. To obtain an order form, go to "<http://www.arneberg.com/bbshop/breakpoint>".

As we all move forward to pursue various other endeavors from chorus directing, coaching, church singing, parenting, family, work, and perhaps even more quartet singing, we are gratified to be parting as the best of friends. And the friendship we've gained from all of you has made our quartet journey a real blessing.

Thanks Again,

BreakPoint

## BOTY!

Facts? What facts? The plaque says 2002 BOTY. If you mean my stories about joining the GNU, then it goes like this...



*2002 Barbershopper of the Year – John Babbs with his wife, Holly*

In about 1989, I was running a management seminar at the company where Rod Johnson was employed. I only

knew him from the class. At lunch one day I learned that he was in a barbershop quartet. "Cute"...I thought. I moved the conversation to another person. It came back around and I learned that his quartet won some sort of International competition and that they had sung with the Kings Singers (heart flutter) and before the Queen. "OK, thought I...must be something more to this than I understand". He said they were part of a chorus, that the chorus had a show coming up and asked if I'd like to go. I did. The GNU opened up with Battle Hymn of the Republic and my life changed on the spot. I had always dreamed of finding a group of singers that good, but college choirs were all done for me, so there seemed little hope. As I traveled extensively for work, I could only become a groupie.

In 1997 I could not stand it any more and decided to try out various choruses. I had sung with the Commodores for several weeks and was having fun. They were very nice to me. There are guys who still greet me by name from those few weeks. It was July, and I went to the Como Park singout with my youngest son, Nate. I listened and was impressed with the Commodores. Then along came the GNU. It was a totally different sport! I turned to Nate and said that I would never forgive myself if I did not try out for the GNU. I went that Thursday. I have only missed about 6 rehearsals and 1 show since then.

Holly and I have no relatives within about 1000 miles. You guys are my family. I am humbled to be on the same BOTY list as Jurgenson, Cannella, Lynch, Dowma, Emery, Stanfield, Orff, Kvigne, and Erlandson. I am honored to represent all of you as your BOTY, as your Treasurer, and as a member of the board. It is indeed an amazing sport that we share together.

Tony DeRosa said something in Duluth this past May that has struck me hard. He said "barbershopping at this level is not a hobby...it is a way of life". How true it is. How true it is.

## GNU Annual Award Banquet

On Saturday evening, September 13, a fun filled time for members and special guests was had at the Mystic Lakes Casino Hotel. After several years of "just not



Continued on page 5

## GNU Awards Banquet, Cont. from page 4

getting around" to this annual event, it was felt that we wanted to once again create something which would honor our ladies and other special guests, serve as a formal Installation of Officers, and to also present the annual awards. The venue was genteel and lovely. The food was great as was the personalized service.



As folks entered, during the initial social hour, we participated in a mixer game. GNU logo apparel was awarded to the winners of the game. First place went to Erik Dove. Also eligible for prizes were: Michael Franssen, Cleon Wahlin, Don Russell, Jeff and Kathy Hickman, and Maria Erlandson. Congratulations!

As the after-dinner program began, each member had the opportunity to introduce his own guest. It was nice to get a chance to meet wives and family for the first time as well to re-establish connections with "old" faces.



*Co-Performance Vice Presidents, Erik Dove and Marty Monson presenting Theresa Meyer with the "BIF" Award*

The new Officers were inducted in a memorable protocol which was administered by immediate Past President Roger Meyer, who also served as Master of Ceremonies. Jim Higgins and Don Knecht gave out attendance awards of hangar bars for the badges. After

that, outgoing First Lady Theresa Meyer presented the new First Lady Phyllis Higgins with her hangar badge.

The "BIF" Award, which as you might imagine, is another rather humorous yet nonetheless coveted award. This one is a toilet seat with mirror in the center and is normally given to the member who has the "best improved face", also of course, another reference to presentations skills. Departing a bit from precedence,

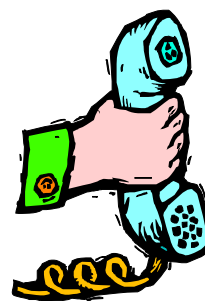


*The Happy Feet Award (a coveted and rather humorous gilded sneaker) was given by Marty Monson and Erik Dove to front row champion, Jeff Aldrich.*

this year it went to Theresa Meyer, much to her surprise and pleasure, for her part in helping guys to see themselves in her photos taken during rehearsals and performances.

The evening ended with our ever more loved and respected director, Pete Benson, leading us in a serenade to the ladies with a love song. Then we finished with one of our rousing Gospel numbers. People lingered to sing tags and to visit, just appreciating the time to be among friends. As for next year, Amy Monson has graciously and enthusiastically offered to chair the event; we hope to give you more notice for the 2004 date in order to have a bigger number in attendance. Such a good time was had this time, that we know you won't want to miss it.

**GNU Hotline ... Use it!**



**763-476-7383**



### Coaching with Mark Hale

Once again, Mark Hale worked with us on Saturday, September 13, and it won't be the last time. For sure, we will have him back. His rapport with us, and with our director, is evident. He is candid in his comments ("there is work to be done") but applauds our responsiveness to his suggestions. We worked not only on contest vehicles but also on songs for our next recording.



### Judy!

Once again, Judy Olson has graced us with her presence as she worked with us on skills, which will showcase our work to the District in October. She has our total attention each time she comes and it is well deserved. Our lessons fall under the category of "All moves should only enhance the music".

### GNU sings the National Anthem at the Twins game.

"You guys were great!" "The audience listened to every note!" "Usually that doesn't happen". These were the words of the lady who escorted us on and off the field for the Twins Game on August 22. We sang well despite the difficult acoustics and we felt very good about the performance. Then, during the "7th inning stretch", an octet composed of GNU stars sang the ever popular "Take me out to the Ballgame", which was also received with enthusiasm. Many members brought family to enjoy a night at the Dome. It was one of the largest crowds, at nearly 40,000 people, which added to the excitement. There is hope that we will be invited back soon.



GNU "Oh Say Can You See..."



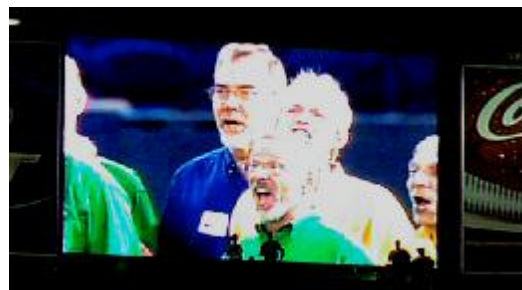
Jim Emery with his son, Colin



Scott Kvigne ready to lead us in the National Anthem before the game.



Kevin Lynch enjoying the game



Right, Dan Vanderploeg and Mike Brama on the Jumbotron!

## From the Judges Pit

***The Great northern Union is very fortunate to count 9 judges and 2 candidate judges among our members. Through this column, we will get advice from these experts on how to improve our individual performance.***

### What Is Support Anyway?

Jim Emery

In my last article, I talked about the inhale side of the breath cycle. In this issue I will tackle the other half of that cycle: what to do with the air after you've inhaled it. Before you jump in, though, it might be a good idea to go back and reread the inhale article just to be sure the two halves of the cycle work well together.

One of my favorite books about singing is Jerome Hines' book "The Four Voices Of Man". Hines devotes two extensive chapters to the concept of "support" (or appoggio, as the Italians call it). They are excellent reading for anyone who really wants to get into this in depth.



Hines begins by suggesting that if your natural breathing gives you no singing problems, don't mess with it. But for all the rest of us who sometimes have trouble making it to the end of a phrase or getting a consistently rich tone, read on.

Hines goes on to describe nine (9!) different methods of support. Now you begin to see how truly controversial this topic can be! There is the "push down to the floor" method. (I call them the "down an outers".) There is the "press up on the balloon" method. (I call them the "up and inners".) There is the "continuous wave from bottom to top" method. And so on, for another six methods. Which method will work best for you? Probably the only way to know for sure is to try several with the aid of a competent voice teacher.

But I can't leave you dangling like that without anything to go practice, can I? No, I would probably be banned from writing any more articles like this. So I'll give you the Jim Emery method of breath support. It is actually a combination of several of the methods described in Hines' book. What I like about it is its simplicity. I hope you agree after you try it.

Here's how I do it. After you take a wonderfully relaxed inhale with an open throat, you have a nice full feeling in the lungs and the abdomen. This is because the lungs

filled, pushing the rest of the abdominal organs down and out. I call this the "full balloon" feeling.

Now when you begin to sing on this air, just keep that feeling of a full balloon as long as you comfortably can. That is, resist the temptation for the gut to pull in. Just keep the balloon full and expanded for the duration of the phrase if possible.

Without going into all the physiology or anatomy behind it, this approach maintains an excellent balance between the contracted diaphragm holding the air back and the rest of the compressed abdomen pushing the air out. It is this balanced strength and counter-strength that produces optimal support.

Give it a try. If it works as well for you as it does for me, I think you'll like it. If it doesn't, then we still have nine other methods you can try!

## District Competition... Coming Soon

Not only is the chorus planning to win back the District Championship trophy, but Hilltop also has 8 quartets competing.

In order of ranking going into the contest.

- ♪ Nouveau
- ♪ Live Wire
- ♪ Apex
- ♪ MSP
- ♪ Special Alliance
- ♪ Double Down
- ♪ Mood Swing
- ♪ PRISM (novice champs)

## New Board Members Elected

President	Jim Higgins
VP Performance	Marty Monson Eric Dove
VP Marketing	Loring Harrup
VP Membership	Don Knecht
VP Fund Devlpmt	Harvey Berwin
VP Chorus Mgmt.	Kent Erlandson
Treasurer	John Babbs
Secretary	Dave Miller
Member at Large	Bill Lydecker Dan Vanderploeg Art Vanderwater Chuck McKown
Past President	Roger Meyer



## Performances



### September 11 Observance

Great Northern Union joined the Minneapolis Commodores and the St Paul North Star Chorus as well as Sweet Adeline Quartet "4-Star Collection" at the magnificent St. Paul Cathedral for a special observance of this important day in United States history. The singers as well as those in the audience felt a special sense of brotherhood and patriotism.

### Como Park Sing-out

Seems like our Como Park event always falls on a hot summer night. The sheltered pavilion provided shade and a bench from which to watch the various Metro choruses as they entertained us. Spirits were high despite the heat. But GNU is already looking for a summer uniform in order to perform in relative comfort next year. Actually, the dress uniforms were pretty much called for this time as we performed our current international package. It is always great to dress the part! Anyway, it is a fine event coordinated by the St Paul North Star Chorus. And a great time to re-connect with our brother barbershoppers from all around the metro.



### Bethany Church Service

A tiny congregation with a big heart, Bethany in Richfield allowed us to be the featured music at a July Sunday service. We joined them for coffee afterwards and met an African Missionary, a cancer survivor, great young people, some senior citizens, as well as younger couples.



Television KARE 11's Belinda Jensen was the Mistress of Ceremonies for the program that was scripted by Kenosha for all local areas around the country. The program consisted of not only the combined choruses but also community singing to reflect our pride in this nation and to honor the sacrifices made by those who died on September 11, 2001.

Originally the event was to be held at St. Paul's Harriet Island. But due to rain, the cathedral provided not only shelter and a sense of history, but also a memorable reverberation of chords beyond description.



## Members; Get to know 'em

### Meet Tim Milbrant

My name is Tim Milbrandt. I sing Bass.

I live in Rochester with my wife Kerri and my children Joshua (4) and Julia (2). I have lived in several cities in southcentral and southeastern Minnesota, as well as Lexington Kentucky.

I first got into barbershop around the summer of 1985 with the Rochester Music Men. My first contest was the 1986 fall district contest in Fargo. I believe this was also the first district contest for the GNU.



I sang with the Albert Lea Chapter for about six and a half years. I briefly sang with GNU in 1993, before being transferred for work and ending up with Albert Lea again. While living in Kentucky I sang with the Louisville Times. I again joined the GNU this past winter.

I currently sing Bass in Double Down. We have been singing together for about three years. The other guys in the quartet are fellow GNUer Ken Kiehne on lead, Nate Schmidt from Albert Lea on baritone, and Leonard Huls from Mankato on Tenor. A side note is that our first tenor was Brad Berget of GNU and Mood Swing/Lazer Tones fame. I have sung in a few other quartets as well. One of the best quartet experiences I have had was going to Harmony College last summer. It was a blast!

In closing I want to say how welcomed I have felt as a new GNU. There is a very supportive and encouraging environment in this chorus that makes the long drives on Thursdays a little bit easier. I think I have met most of you and look forward to getting to know the rest of you soon.

PS Miles McDonald sings a heckuva lead into my left ear every week. He should really be in a quartet!

### David Bailey-Aldrich AKA: Opera Boy

As I was growing up, my dad's side of the family was always singing. We would always sing at family gatherings, and my first public performance was singing "Jesus Loves Me" to the assembled mass of Aldrich's (some 40 strong, I think) at the tender age of five.

When I was in 9th grade, my dad and I sang a couple of songs with a friend of mine from school. One of those songs was "My Wild Irish Rose". I still hadn't heard the term barbershop as yet though.

Around the same time (1987 or so), my older brother Jeff joined the Appleton, WI chapter. Their chapter show, with Classic Collection and The Ivy League, was my first exposure to barbershop.

I moved back to Minneapolis with my new wife in 1994. Jeff was back in the area after a job change. He was back into barbershop, singing with the Bloomington MN chapter. He even talked me into singing in a quartet with him. I still knew next to nothing about barbershop, or SPEBSQSA. I just wanted to sing, and Jeff was excited about the idea. I joined the Society as a Frank Thorne member.

Jump forward about a year. I'm really enjoying barbershop, and I decide to join a chapter. Jeff really wanted to join the GNU, and he brought me along to visit. I was hooked, and joined a few weeks later. What a great gift my brother had given me.

Through all of this, my dad was always a very supportive and encouraging spectator. When I joined my second quartet, Innovation, he would follow us around as we sang at chapter shows, sometimes driving more than a few hours.



I know that dad wants to sing with the GNU. I wish he could do that, but the nature of his hearing loss just doesn't allow it. I know that this is devastating to him however, instead of being bitter he chose to get involved and be a part of this group with his sons, however he could. As time went by, dad became more interested in the workings of the GNU. He also expressed an interest in joining the chapter as a non-singing member. I was thrilled, and brought up the idea with some of the other members of the Music Team. They were supportive, so we went forward with it. As far as I know, dad was the first non-singing member of the Hilltop chapter. I hope he's not the last. He is just now finishing a term as the Marketing VP.

What an honor it is to be a part of a group with my brother and father, sharing our family's love of music in such a fine fraternity

## Rehearsal Moments



Trying out new riser positions



Pouring out those emotions with Roger Stanfield's guidance




Pete reinforcing "The Model" as presented by Mark Hale





# Hilltop Chapter Quartets

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Apple Valley, MN 55124  
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email: olsoncrew@aol.com

Jim Tom  
Keith Steve



**APEX**

Contact: Keith Olson  
4558 368th Ave.  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
(320) 269-5142  
ksolson@charter.net



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**DOUBLE  
DOWN**



A Barbershop Quartet

Contact Tim Millbrandt 1-507-536-9513  
1411 Durand Cr. SE, Rochester, MN 55904 tkjm@earthlink.net

Ellis Jones, Tenor Bruce Gray, Lead



**MAGIC**

Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372  
bgray@gustavus.edu



Don Miller, Baritone Denny Jackson, Bass





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. 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 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)