



International Medalist
GREAT NORTHERN UNION
CHORUS



HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION – LAND O' LAKES DISTRICT

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GNU's NEWS

April 2004

Downstate Express Wins International Seniors Competition



Downstate Express, representing the Land O' Lakes District, captured the 2004 seniors quartet crown Saturday January 31st. The quartet was best among 27 competitors in the contest, held at the Society's Midwinter Convention in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Having sung together for two decades, **Downstate Express** is a veteran of the contest stage, having previously won the 1982 Land O' Lakes District championship.

Members of **Downstate Express** are:

- Ed Wirtz, tenor, Mankato Chapter
- Bruce Odell, lead, Winona Chapter
- Gary Rogness, bass, Rochester Chapter
- Richard Treptow, bari, Greater Indianapolis Chapter

Richard Treptow is a very recent past member of The Great Northern Union.

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The Director's Cut

Spring is in the air which means that summer will soon follow. And summer means International Competition for the GNU. In the season when most choral groups are winding down, we're just winding up!

Gentlemen, I hope that you are as enthused as I am about our potential for success in Louisville. Great Arrangements + Great Coaches + Great Leaders + Great Enthusiasm & Hard Work = SUCCESS. We know the formula and we have all the ingredients. There should be no doubt



in anyone's mind that we have made great strides since last year. Quoting Mark Hale from a recent email regarding his last visit and our new improved uptune, "You're poised for a big jump over last year given the improvement you've made." That statement is doubly encouraging, first, because Mark is not easy to please, and secondly, because he'll be in the pit in Louisville.

As I look at our calendar from now until July, I can see that we don't have one second to waste. We're under the gun to get our "new" uptune ready for Mark's next (and last) visit in April. Are you up for the challenge? In addition, we are cramming in recording sessions, new repertoire, choreography, coaching, Twins game, retreat, and the "On to Fame" show. I would say that an active chorus is a healthy chorus and if we're smart, we will use each of these activities as an opportunity to practice excellence.

"Winning is not a some-time thing. It is an all-time thing. You don't do things right once in a while; you do them right all the time." Vince Lombardi

PETE



Presidents Corner

My Fellow GNUs!

We are on our way. Where? We are on our way to success. After last fall's contest we know that we are in store for big accomplishments. Those of us who sang for Roger Williams all realize what a gem we had in him. But how lucky can you get? We now have Pete! That, men, is true good fortune. We must have been living right or God must just love us. (It's probably the latter.) You have heard of Jim Clancy. Everybody in the barbershopping world has. He's one the top directors in the barbershop society. That is my prediction of where Pete will be when he "grows up". (He's only 34 years old! Unbelievable!)



Why do I mention this? First of all, I believe it and secondly, because he deserves our respect as our esteemed director. When Pete is in front of us, let us give him the respect of a Jim Clancy. Let's get the noise down to zero. As the pitch pipe is blown, prepare your instrument (that's you) and engage before you sing. Let the energy flow. If you are singing a happy song, tell your face. If you are singing a melancholy song, tell your face. If you are singing a sad ballad, tell your face. The audience wants to have fun with you when you sing a happy song and they want to feel your pain with that sad ballad. If you aren't "living" the music, surprise, they won't either. While doing this, sing in the model. You know how to do this. It is almost habit with some of us. It is habit with others of us. (You know who they are. Let's each be one of them.)

I think we all know that Pete is an unbelievable director. Every once in a while, **tell** him how much you appreciate his work. **Every time** you stand on the risers, show him how much you appreciate him with your attention and focus.

Jim Higgins



FIRST ANNUAL GNU AWARD OF HARMONY – WOW! By Harvey Berwin

What I remember most was that the audience seemed to applaud for a very long time when Gary Ales was presented with the GNU Award of Harmony. Not just the usual "that's nice" or the "we're really pleased" type of applause, but a very generous, "Wow, what an accomplishment" kind of applause. What a warm, heartfelt reception that was for our first award recipient. And let me tell you – Gary was really moved by the experience.



Photo by Dawn Holmberg

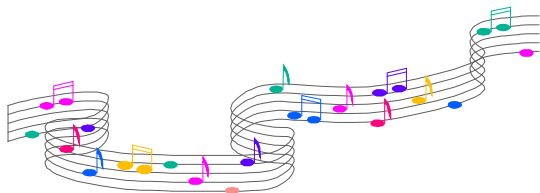
I have known Gary Ales for close to ten years. We're the kind of friends you become when you have played handball with (and against) someone almost every Saturday morning for all that time. Over the years, you get to know something about the people you play ball with – even if only through casual conversations. Gary is one guy who always has something doing after the game. It almost always has something to do with his "kids" – members of the friendship club which Gary began about 40 years ago. Singing at a senior home, cleaning trash from highways, painting or remodeling a home for a needy or disabled person. These are some of the activities of the "Friendship Club" Put this together with a genuinely pleasant, warm, accepting personality. He is a special person, indeed.

As the nominator of the first recipient of this award, I have to say what a privilege it was for me to see Gary be honored. I can tell you it stands as a significant point in his life. Recognition of this kind is perhaps most appreciated by truly deserving people who don't expect any reward for what they do. We have an opportunity to provide that recognition each year with our Award of Harmony. Do you know someone who deserves a real pat on the back for what they have done? Nominations open in the Fall!

Ed. note: Thanks also to Dan Vander Ploeg, who chaired this event and solicited some great nominees."



Serenading on Valentines Day was the pick up quartet “Three Handsome Guys” whose members included: Roger Meyer, Jerry Germain, Dan Vander Ploeg, and Robert Griffith



Singing Valentines a success once more!

This year Singing Valentines went out on both February 13th and 14th. **Tom Semple** of the GNU headed up the coordination of who was going to sing where and when. No easy task! Lots of publicity went out in the form of TV, radio and newsprint thanks to Jim Lee of the St Paul Chapter. We were on Kare 11 a couple of times, first with "**PRISM**" about 2 weeks in advance, then with "**Nouveau**" on the morning of the 14th. This landed us 10 last minute gigs.

We had a couple of different features in many of the Sun Times papers, the first featured the **Minnetonka Clippers** and the **MN Go-4s** quartet and their role in the Singing Valentine operation, about 2 weeks before the 14th. The second was the week before the 14th.

There was also an article in the New Brighton Bulletin.

As for radio, we had some spot announcement play on WCCO about a week before the 14th.

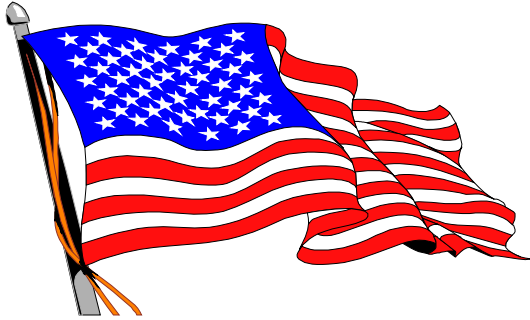
Attention all photographers:

We are inviting all members, spouses and family to submit photos for possible publication in the **GNU's News**.

Just send them electronically to Meyer's or Anderson's. These will always be welcome and should broaden our perspective on many GNU events.

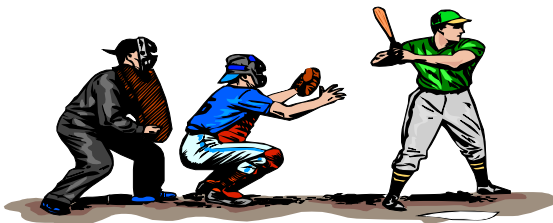


Many have already heard, but I don't want to miss anybody. The GNU has arranged to have a large Joe Barbershopper chorus sing the anthem at the HHH Metrodome on Wednesday, May 12 (6:55 PM CST).



I've already sent word to every chapter for which I had an e-mail contact and asked for estimates of how many singers will be there - and how many total seats will be needed if people are bringing family or guests to watch. Ticket ordering will be handled at the chapter level.

We will use Val Hicks' arrangement of the Star Spangled Banner and are working to coordinate logistics as well as possible. The goal is to give LOL members a chance to sing at a major league ballgame (Twins vs. Seattle).



With that, I'm also hoping chapters will use the opportunity to bring in new members and get some attention from their town paper, radio or tv stations.

If there are 3 or 4 volunteers out there who want to help coordinate a media effort, please contact me at the address above. I'll look forward to singing with some of you (all of you?) on May 12!

Loring Harrop
Marketing Team
Great Northern Union
marketing@gnunion.com

Division Contest

The Land O' Lakes Division Contest was held March 20th at Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater, MN. Hilltop was well represented and our quartets took the top 4 places.

After Midnight (Tom Matchinsky, David Bailey-Aldrich, Jim Emery, Steve McDonald) took 1st place with a district qualifying percentage of 73.8%.

Men at Work (Bruce Stasch, Steve Hardy, Loring Harrop, Jim Barloon) took 2nd with a district qualifying percentage of 66.5%.

PRISM (Steve Nolte, Cleon Wahlin, Alan Matchinsky, Darren Hoehne) took 3rd Place with a district qualifying percentage of 65.1%.

Special Alliance (David Wall, Glen Aronson, Doug Miller, Lance Johnson) took 4th place just missing the cut for district this year by 1/10th of a percent.

The quartets needed 65% score to qualify for district in the fall.



Guest Night

With our guest night behind us, we have completed the first phase of our membership recruitment for this year. We introduced 16 guests to the chorus. We now need to follow up on those who are serious about joining by making them feel welcome as they come back. I am sure you will be in touch with any of them whom you know. Several of you told Mary and me about people you had invited who were interested but just couldn't come last night. I will send them another message encouraging them to come any time. If you know of others in this category send me their names and address for follow up. We now have over 100 people out there who are at least more aware of the GNU, so keep up the good work.
Don



Left, Membership VP, Don Knect with his wife, Mary welcoming guests at Guest Night.
Above: Nouveau and Bravo!
Below: Guests intently watching the chorus rehearsal



Please be advised that our **DULUTH RETREAT** is going to be Friday, Saturday & Sunday, MAY 14TH, 15TH & 16TH.

.We have been able to keep the same costs as last year. The cost includes: Friday & Sat. night rooms, breakfast Sat & Sun, noon lunch buffet and evening meal on Saturday. Beer, pop & "munchies" courtesy of the "Friday's group"



The costs are as follows: 2 men to a room, \$139.00 per person; 3 to a room, \$117.00 per person; and 4 to a room \$102.00 per person. Please get your room-mates organized and let me know A.S.A.P!

Thanks for your cooperation in this matter
JIM LUTZ

P.S. - Those interested in a Friday evening dinner at the **Pickwick** (around 5:30) please let me know as well - because they do not take reservations, but will work with me/us with enough advance notice.

Comments about our coaching session with Mark Hale:

Last Saturday's session with Mark Hale was really exciting. Not because of the usual exhilaration we get when a visiting coach manages to get us to sing at our highest levels. Not because of the heightened levels of fraternity that these sessions induce. And definitely not because of the veiled or overt expressions of how good we are. Quite the contrary. It was exciting because Mark was straight with us. We are good. Very Good! That is what he told us. Not Great. Definitely not a threat to the VM, but very good. He also told us that there are things that we do that maybe only one



other chorus can do. These are the things that can help differentiate the GNU and help us reach the levels we seek. Mark was clear on the tactics we must use to get back to the medals.

The first is the easiest to achieve: Do what Pete is asking of us. He affirmed that his major accomplishment on this trip was to come from California to tell us that Pete knows what he is doing. Duh!

Number two: Put more sparkle in our singing and presentation. I think I understand what he means. We have made major strides in our presentation skills. We have to some degree overcome our midwestern reserve, but I know we can do more. How do we do the same in our vocal presentation is something we need to ask of our music leadership.

Number three: Add 40 more quality voices. A few years ago after a coaching session someone started a chain of e-mails trying to get everybody to commit by saying "I Believe!" Now, after having a refreshing pail of water thrown in my face, this member of a ninth place chorus says: "I WILL"

I WILL do everything in my power to put the GNU back in the medals. I WILL listen intently to all Pete's guidance and internalize it. I WILL maintain discipline on the risers. I WILL work on presentation on any and all run throughs unless told otherwise. I WILL attend any and all workshops that the presentation team offers. I WILL attend any and all workshops that the vocal team offers. I WILL recruit one new member. I WILL work to reactivate two former GNU members. If we all commit to "I WILL", then I Believe it will happen.

Larry Castriotta



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.

To the wonderful members of the GNU,

For those of you who do not read the Harmonet, there has been an interesting thread there recently on performing tags rather than just chord worshipping them. The following post from Kevin Keller was a particularly good one. It speaks to always being "on" instead of just when in actual performances. I think we can all learn from this one.

--Jim Emery



Date: Fri, 29 Aug 2003 16:58:13 -0000
 From: "kkbari" <kkbari@worldnet.att.net>
 Subject: Re: **Performing** tags, a radical concept!

I'm quite intrigued by the tag singing "emotional" thread. Cheers! first formed exactly in this manner. We all ended up in the same hospitality room at 2000 ILL District. We stood around and decided that we were going to sing "First Hello". "High or low tag?". "High". Cool. Man, is this going to be loud.

Joe, Opie and I are just waiting to peel paint at the tag, and we start singing "Our song was a song..." in an attitude of biding our time until we got to sing loud at the tag. Meanwhile, Chuck is selling the heck out of "Our SONG was a SONG...". After the first phrase, I stopped the quartet and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Sisson, let me have do-overs" (that was the first time I had met Chuck). Then we sold the living daylights out of the song. And that tag was much better than it would have been if we have simply coasted until we got there. That



moment had a profound effect on my approach to singing from then on. Chuck has taught us if you want to be a champion, it isn't a "sometimes thing". It is an "all-the-time thing" (not his words but his actions). We rapidly learned that he never turns off. As a result, we now "never turn off". I was singing tags last year and after the first tag, a guy turned to me and said, "Kevin, this isn't Cheers!". Well, you know what, I now know no other way to sing/perform. I can't turn off now, and frankly, it's more fun to be "on". To reach musical excellence, you can't spend your time turning on and off and ever get close. You either commit to it, or you don't.

I love singing 'em high and loud just like the next guy. I get plenty of practice at it every week!!!!!! But I've learned that it is more fun and you get more ring when you do what all those coaches would coach you to do.

Cheers!

Kevin Keller

Bari, Cheers!

Coming Events

Sunday, April 25 (Change) 2PM-6PM

Mark Hale Special Rehearsal, U.M.C.P.

Fri-Sat, April 30-May 2, '04 TBD

International Quartet Prelims, Fargo

Wed, May 12 5:30 PM

**Barbershoppers Sing for the Twins
(GNU sponsored)**

Fri-Sun, May 14,15,16 '04 7:00 PM

Annual Duluth Retreat

Saturday, June 12 '04 7 PM

On to Fame Show

June 27- July 3 All Week

International Contest Louisville, KY

Saturday Sep 11? 7 PM

Fairmont Show

Nov 13, 2004 TBD

Bethel College Show

Members; Get to know 'em

ERIK DOVE

One of our star leads, Erik Dove, is the current Co-Vice President of the prestigious GNU Performance team. He currently lives in Eagan with his wife Tona, 5 year old daughter, Siri, and 3 year old son, Adin. He grew up in Evansville Indiana, went to college in Crawfordsville, Indiana; then attended law school in Bloomington, Indiana. He has been in the Twin City area since 1992.

His parents are living in retirement at Park Rapids, MN. Dad was a professor of vocal music at U of Evansville; mom was a home ec. teacher; sister is a mom and an actress in New York; and is an accomplished cellist, pianist, and Juilliard Graduate!

Erik has been a musician all his life. His aunt loves to tell that he sat at the piano and sang before he could talk. Additionally, he played violin from age 5 through high school; was in concert orchestra in 2nd grade; and all-city orchestra grades 5-11. He also enjoyed all-city choir; performed in various musicals, including a starring role in "Oliver" in 7th grade, for the high school production. He also has 8 years of piano lessons under his belt; and church choirs as well.



While GNU is his first barbershop chorus, he has dabbled in quarteting: "Highway 52" with Jeff Aldrich, Lorrin Harrop, Jim Barloon; then "Nuance" with Jim Emery, J. Vaughn, and J.Althof; and "Hot Zone" with Brad Berget, Jeff Solum, Tom Puent; and "Spur of the Moment" with Jerry Germain, Brad Berget, and Mine DeMay. "It is always fun, but family constraints make serious quarteting a challenge" he says.

Currently a commercial banker with U.S. Bank, Erik is running a division in St Paul, reporting to the Kurt, son of GNU member Darrell Egertson. His work there involves mostly with companies with revenues between \$5-20 million. Previously, Erik was an attorney with Faegre & Benson in Minneapolis, primarily practicing in environmental and commercial litigation.

Mike Dove, Erik's cousin, persuaded Erik to join GNU immediately when he moved to Minneapolis in January

1992. Actually, he told him that he had "no choice" but to join up! Without a car to his name, and still paying off a 6 month around-the-world tour, several members saw to it that he had transportation to rehearsal. Among them were Mark Jurgensen, Mike Dove, Kevin Lynch, and Greg Dolphin. "The camaraderie, friendships, and great singing kept me coming back for more" he said. "My first annual chapter show was only 6 weeks after I attended my first rehearsal, and Bob Cannella was backstage teaching me choreography for the Nylons medley"... I vowed never to be that unprepared again!"

"I have enjoyed (and continue to enjoy) singing with many fine men, several of whom are no longer with the chorus. Weddings, funerals, births, divorces, thrilling victories and crushing defeats--through it all, the 'family' and brotherhood that is shared by all within the group cannot be duplicated. During my own family's health problems in 2003, the support and strength of character shown by the GNU will always be with me; and the testament to the communal power shared in singing. ...NOW ON TO THE GOLD!"



Hilltop Chapter Quartets

Got Music?
Have a
Nouveau
Experience
with
**Dave Tony
Duane Jim**
A Barbershop Quartet

Contact: Jim Olson
14466 Everest Avenue
Apple Valley, MN 55124
Phone: 952-431-3110
email: olsoncrew@aol.com

**HAPPINESS
EMPORIUM**
BARBERSHOP
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www.HappinessEmporium.com
CONTACT: Rod Johnson
1308 Blue Phlox Court
Northfield, Minnesota 55057
507.645.5750

MIKE MARTY DAN DAVE

BRAVO!
A
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QUARTET

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(W)763-441-0572
dschrades@msn.com

E-mail: dougmilr@aol.com Tax I.D. #41-1903683

Special Alliance
GLENN, DAVE, LANCE & DOUG (Barbershop Quartet)

Contactman: DOUG MILLER 4822 Rutledge St.
612-447-8265 Prior Lake, MN 55372

Ellis Jones, Tenor Bruce Gray, Lead

MAGIC
Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372
bgray@gustavus.edu

Don Miller, Baritone Denny Jackson, Bass



Choreography!



New (to us) choreographer **Bev Lynde**, from St. Louis, met with us for an evening in March to introduce some choreography for our uptune for Louisville. We will be singing **When the Midnight Choo Choo Leaves for Alabam'**. The choreography is awesome and she has us using our hats from last year in Montreal. The arrangement has been "tweaked" a couple of times and is coming along great. Bev will join us again in May at our retreat in Duluth.

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