

Harmonotes

The Quarterly Bulletin of the
Kansas City Heart of America Chorus

CHORUS AND QUARTET SINGING
IN THE BARBERSHOP STYLE



SECOND-OLDEST CHAPTER IN THE
BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY

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FROM THE HEART

HOA CONTINUES TO MOVE FORWARD

By Mike Schumacher, HOA President



SCHUMACHER

Wow, it's the middle of April and the weather people are predicting snow (again) and we're all practicing physical distancing (for five weeks) because of the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic. Wow, you might say . . . "What else could go wrong?" Well, this article is not going to be about any of the seemingly endless problems that we see on the news.

This article is going to be about some of the wonderful things HOA continues to do to move forward especially in times like these. It's real easy to find ourselves sitting on the couch not doing anything because of all the things we're hearing in the news. In these uncertain times, we need to look to the future and keep planning as best we can. When the stay-at-home orders first came from the medical and government officials, the term "social

In This Issue:

- 3** Still Some Life In Handful
- 4** Swing Shift at HEP School
- 6** Harmony Explosion 2020: Another Great Year for Young Quartets!
- 7** 2020 Harmony Explosion Winners!
- 11** Monroe Clyde Duerksen 1933-2020
- 12** Calvin M. Yoder 1946-2020
- 15** Barbershop Underground: Join The Resistance!

Harmonotes

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Chapter meets at 7 p.m. each Tuesday night, at
Center High School
87th and Holmes - Kansas City, Mo. 64131

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Todd Anderson (Editor)
2909 West Trevor Trail • Ozark, Mo. 65721-8438
(417) 766-2367 • todd@andersondesign.biz

HOA Board meetings take place at 6pm on the second Monday or Tuesday of the month, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 100 East Red Bridge Road, Kansas City, MO 64131. Chapter members are welcome!

HOA Website: www.hoachorus.com
Web Address: webstaff@hoachorus.com
Chorus Manager & Webmaster - Vince Perry



(Continued from front cover)

distancing" came into our everyday vocabulary. But it was soon pointed out that we should be practicing "physical distancing" because with the computerized world we live in, it is so easy to stay socially connected. Six years ago when I retired from my job of 32 years, I would never have guessed that I would be learning new skills with this stupid old computer. But because of the HOA Board in support of the Music Team, I am doing just that (we are all doing just that). We are all learning to use the Zoom teleconferencing method of staying connected. This is probably the most important part of this rambling article is encouraging ALL HOA members (inactive, active, and even those that have let their membership lapse) to stay connected. To support and encourage each other through these uncertain times!

The Zoom meetings are getting better as we all learn what can and can't be done. There is an incredible team of guys working to lead us in getting better and moving forward. As soon as this 'stay at home' period in our lives started, **John Braden** took it upon himself to put out an email, almost daily, with a link to hear and see a favorite quartet or chorus sing a wonderful song. Just to keep harmony in the forefront of our lives. **Carter Combs, Barry Sanders** and **Bob Velazques** are learning to administer and lead our meetings. **Don Fuson, Marlin Weidler** and **Tom Riedel** are all reaching out to help guys learn the process of joining the meetings to the point of making sure they have the proper equipment. The whole Music Team (Carter, Bob, Ted, Bruce, Eric, John and Jerry) is involved with making the meetings as positive and educational and fun as they can be. And the meetings are reaching out and touching lives! Be involved by calling your fellow chapter members and making sure they are ok and they feel connected to the whole group. In the 3 or 4 Zoom meetings, we've seen and heard from **Raymond Schwarzkopf, Charlie Drake, Phil Veltkamp, Matt Bostick, Rick Foreman, Dave Hokanson, Dale Neuman, Don Newman, Joe Mathieu** and **Bob Burdick** (some we haven't seen or heard from for a while) and, of course, a lot of the regular guys. We've averaged 32 at each meeting. I think that's awesome!

As I said last night, HOA has always been "community" minded and now we have to reach out by phone, text and email and make sure ALL our brothers in harmony feel part of that community. My goal is to keep HOA learning, connected, involved and a chorus of harmony-minded guys. Harmony in music and harmony in the world around us. And with your help, we can make that goal really happen. "Keep the whole world singing." ♥

HARMONY FOUNDATION REPORT

by Jim Porter



Note that we will have our raffle each time we meet in our regular location. All of the proceeds of the raffle not given as prizes or used for expenses of the raffle go to Harmony Foundation at the end of each year.

As of March 10, the last time we were able to meet before the flu panic closed everything down, after 9 drawings (7 since the last report):

- The total collected for Harmony Foundation since the last report is \$252. The total collected for the year 2020 to date is \$305.
- The carry-over jackpot amount stood at \$660. ♥

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

by Bob Velasquez

I hope and pray that our Barbershop community can stay safe healthy in light of this pandemic. Our Barbershop world has been put to a complete stop. For a few weeks barbershop was not even important. Many of us were just concerned for our families well being. Then it really hit, "NO Barbershop Meetings" at all, what are we going to do? Like the rest of the world we looked for ways to meet up with the guys. Then this Zoom thing came in, and many of us started to learn this new technology. New to many of us anyway.

I am proud to say our HOA community braved the uncertain and downloaded the application and gave it a go. Our first ever online meeting had over 30 members in attendance. That was amazing! We were just excited to see each other, talk and reminisce about some old times. Don Fuson decide he was going to take it upon himself and make sure every member could use the Zoom application so they can participate in the meetings. Our Barbershop community started communicating in a different way. We have met several times and the music team is working on making the zoom experience enjoyable. It is very different to be singing to a computer. The more I do it I realize I sing to keep the old pipes moving. I am singing for my well being! Singing the warm ups and singing the songs for the week are helping me stay in vocal shape.

We are still working on a format that will entertain, inform and educate. If you have not joined us recently, I invite you to join us on Zoom every Tuesday night. We still are not able to make those wonderful barbershop chords together, but when we can, I want to be vocally ready. ♥

STILL SOME LIFE IN HANDFUL

by John Erwine



The month of February found us on the road – from Riverside (Riverside Nursing and Rehabilitation) to the First Baptist Church of Blue Springs. There we presented a 40-minute performance for the "KEENAGERS," a senior group of about 100. This destination is always a joy, probably our third outing there. And as an added benefit is the wonderful food they serve us. This is **Barry Sanders'** church.

One exercise we do annually to begin the new year is to take stock of our repertoire. First, we decide which "charts," slang for music, we want to keep. Then those we feel should be eliminated for any number of reasons. Next, each member is encouraged to submit potential new ones. None of those have been nailed down yet, as this coronavirus has us all twiddling our vocal chords at home.

In addition to some of our suggestions, our magnanimous 'Ye olde waveless arm waver, **Jim Bagby**, found another couple of treasures. As he was whiling away the hours cleansing his music library of duplicates, outdated and questionably legal copies, he found a couple of jewels; **Mo Rector's Country Roads** and **Bruce Wenner's Cool Water** (as done by the *Sons of the Pioneers*) for NHH consideration. HOA did this on our western show a couple decades ago. Also, a short comedy skit about a tipsy fellow, a high-toned lady and a pig. Not sure where this is going, but in him we trust?

A suggestion he has also offered while he says we are playing "stay at home and behave yourself" is this -- every barbershopper owes it to themselves to watch **Dave Stevens' What Are We Trying To Preserve** and **Jim Henry's Golden Moments**, (both presentations at HU). BHS has now combined them onto one DVD.

And as this was going to press, the *Handful* also was trying to put together a meeting by Zoom, similar to those HOA had been doing with pretty good success.

Meanwhile, many of our upcoming gigs have been postponed, but looking forward to honoring them. Until we meet again, . . . **Keep the Whole World Singing!** ♥

SWING SHIFT AT HEP SCHOOL

"That's a really good difference in sound. It's a good look for you, too."

By John Braden

Eager to get some more coaching at a very reasonable cost, *Swing Shift* attended the Central States District Harmony Education Program — HEP School — Feb. 8, 2020, in St. Joseph.

Our quartet "coaching under glass" sessions were tightly scheduled in the morning since tenor **Carter "The Big Wheel" Combs** was booked facilitating Leadership Academy sessions all afternoon on "Contests - Something for Everyone." And, we started out as a threesome at 9 a.m. since bass **Eric "Sleep-deprived" Weber** worked all night Friday night and came straight to St. Joe as soon as he could get free.

After a morning general session, our first coaching session was with **Sandi Wright** — director of the Harmony Inc. chorus St. Louis Vocal Project; a judge for *Harmony Inc.*, *Sweet Adelines* and *BHS*, and spouse of *BHS* arranger and coach **David Wright**.

Sandi focused on presentation, helping us figure out when we are singing to ourselves, to the whole world, to each other or to a "person" on stage. She also worked on the dynamic plan and helping us think about what is happening in each part of the song, especially "Old Cape Cod."

"Arrangers put key changes in for events," she said. "They want to make an event happen. It's not a pitch correction, it's not anything more than just to get the audience excited. So, we've had a lot of violins and we are going to bring in the brass here. So, we're going to up our game just a little bit. So, it's going to be

bigger, it's going to be louder, it's going to be fuller. It's going to be different than it just was. So, we want to make the event happen. So, at the 'remind you of the town where YOU WERE BORN, DAH, DAH, DAH-DAH...' That's where everything comes up and it's the grand finale."

Our second coach, *Central Standard* and *Vocal Standard* Director **Rob Mance**, focused on proper singing techniques to produce better sound. A number of these were similar to those *HOA* had heard from vocal pedagogy teacher **Steve Scott**.

Lead **John "It's The Lead's Fault" Braden** got his earholes lined up above his shoulders and his chin brought down so he had a

long back-of-the-neck and a short front-of-the-neck. Then to stop forward travel of the lower jaw, Rob had him, elbows up, put his thumbs below his lower lip and the first two fingers of each hand grabbing the back of his skull, creating a chin clamp. John then sang "Old Cape Cod" with his jaw thusly clamped.

"That's a really good difference in sound. OK?" Rob said. "It's a good look for you, too."

Eric's looks were then improved as he was in-

structed to keep the tip of the tongue at his lower gum line, which lowers the tongue in the back so his sound is not as muffled. Then he was instructed to use his phone camera to watch his own mouth as he sang. Eric said he sounded like Elmer Fudd. Rob said that would get better.

"Everything we are doing here is going against things that are habit," Rob said. "So, these little tools can help us redefine what



Rob Mance designs *Swing Shift's* new choreography package for "Old Cape Cod." If you want to hear what these downs sounded like, search for "Swing Shift" on Facebook.

normal is. None of these things are going to go away overnight. But if you do a little of this each day, this can become the new normal."

We sure didn't look normal, though.

Carter said in the quartet he tried to back off his chorus-tenor volume but thought he was losing quality and resonance. Rob told Carter to poke around above his gut until he found his sternum, then move to the soft spot below the sternum -- the epigastrium.

"As you're singing, I want you to feel, is it tight, is it medium, is it soft," Rob said. "Just feel for what consistency this is. So why don't you, just Pillsbury Doughboy-style, keep kind of poking yourself. This area here, we actually never want to tighten that up. We always want it remaining soft. If we tighten up those muscles, there's going to be some additional tension... The notes where this was free, there was a much greater freedom to the tone. Also, there's a greater stability to the pitch."

Rob then turned his attention to bari **Bob "Hey, I Sing Director" Velazquez**. He told Bob to push the tip of his tongue against the tip of his index finger on every other phrase of the song. Rob was trying to get Bob to relax his tongue by having him sing with his tongue outside his mouth, so he would sing with less tension. But it came out "If you're fond of sand dunes ahh thallty aaaawh..."

Then Rob worked on reducing our jaw movement to help us hit our vowels at the exact same moment.

"Other types of singing, operatic singing in particular, sing with more production of base vowels in order to be heard over the orchestra," Rob said. "In barbershop, what do we use? We use conversational vowels. What are the vowels we use to speak with one another? So, if we use conversational vowels to sing, we can use a conversational vowel opening. Anything beyond a conversational jaw opening is going to start to distort the sound of the vowels... It's important to realize that most of what we're hearing is what's going on in the inside; it's not a matter of how open the jaw is that's going to create a bigger sound."

Both Sandi and Rob were surprised and amused (favorably) by "If You've Only Got a Moustache." Neither had heard the Stephen Foster chestnut before and both offered suggestions how to get more comedy out of the song. ❤️

Happy Birthday!

...to the following HOA MEMBERS!

March 4 Ron McIntire
March 16 Eric Weber
March 17 Don Young
March 23 Charles Ramirez
March 26 Bill Warren
March 29 Jerry Meier
March 30 Doc Jeppesen

April 7 Raymond Schwarzkopf
April 8 Jeff Wolff
April 10 Matt Bostick
April 11 John Erwine
April 14 Bob Howard
April 17 Mike Mathieu
April 21 Dick Krueger
April 24 Marlin Weidler
April 25 Bruce Wenner

May 4 Bob Murphy
May 7 Carter Combs
May 12 Keith Owen
May 16 Ted Simon

June 4 Kevin Tritsch
June 6 Phil Youngs
June 11 Don Fuson
June 13 Tony O'Brien
June 14 Tony Strub
June 15 Dave Hokanson
June 20 Bill Bay
June 20 Dave Perry
June 25 Al Fehlauer
June 28 Barry Sanders
June 29 Keith Schweer

HARMONY EXPLOSION! 2020: ANOTHER GREAT YEAR OF YOUNG QUARTETS!

Article by Jerry Meier, Photos courtesy of Dennis McBride

Harmony Explosion! 2020 was held on Saturday, February 22 at Grace United Methodist Church in Olathe, KS. This new venue proved once again to be a fantastic location to host Harmony Explosion. One hundred thirty students from eleven local schools sang on stage in twenty-nine quartets during the morning session. Sixteen of these quartets earned GOLD medals and performed in the afternoon Parade of Quartets Concert. *BoomTown* (**Zane Sutton, Caleb Fouse, Aaron Walker, Shaun Whisler**) was the featured quartet of the day — they taught the *BHS Chorus* song, judged the quartet session and entertained the audience at the beginning and the end of the day.

THANK YOU to the dozens of HOA and KCCSA and *Olathe Trails West* volunteers that worked to produce the event, along with the staff at Grace United Methodist Church. I think that everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day and had fun helping these students throughout the day.

I want to say THANK YOU to the vocal music teachers at the eleven schools sending students to Harmony Explosion:

Dr. Garrett Epp - Olathe North HS (1 Quartet).
Elise Peterson - Olathe South HS (1 Quartet).
Pam Williamson - Olathe Northwest HS (4 Quartets).
Robin Christie - Bishop Mege HS (6 Quartets).
Dr. Dwayne Dunn - Lawrence HS (2 Quartets).
Hannah Stevens - Gardner-Edgerton HS (1 Quartet).
Jerrold McNutt - Augusta HS (2 Quartets).
Jason Cole - St. James Academy (5 Quartets).
Becky Barr - Prairie Star Middle School (3 Quartets).
Beth Nelson - Oregon Trail Middle School (3 Quartets).
Cassie Sutherland - California Trail Middle School (1 Quartet).

Becky Barr from Prairie Star Middle School deserves a special recognition - all three of her groups earned GOLD medals (one 8th Grade group; one 7th Grade group; one 6th Grade group). In fact, they were the top three groups in the 8th Grade and Under division. ❤️

Medals were awarded to the following quartets:

8th Grade Mixed:	GOLD Medal - <i>Faithful Four</i> (Prairie Star)
8th Grade Mixed:	GOLD Medal - <i>Harmonic Mix</i> (Prairie Star)
8th Grade Mixed:	GOLD Medal - <i>Change Your Tune</i> (Prairie Star)
8th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>The Hamiltones</i> (California Trail)
8th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>We're Lookin' Fine</i> (Oregon Trail)
8th Grade BHS:	SILVER Medal - <i>The Quirky Quarter Notes</i> (Oregon Trail)
8th Grade Mixed:	SILVER Medal - <i>Under the C</i> (Oregon Trail)
10th Grade SAI:	GOLD Medal - <i>Sole Sisters</i> (St. James Academy)
10th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>Dapper Dolls</i> (Bishop Miega)
10th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>4-Way Stop</i> (Bishop Miega)
10th Grade BHS:	SILVER Medal - <i>The Close Shaves</i> (Olathe Northwest)
10th Grade Mixed:	SILVER Medal - <i>Fourtissimos</i> (Bishop Miega)
10th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>Blastin' Babes of Barbershop</i> (Lawrence)
10th Grade SAI:	Exhibition Only - <i>Christie's Cups Crew</i> (Bishop Miega)
12th Grade SAI:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Fortes</i> (Olathe Northwest)
12th Grade SAI:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Dreamgirlz</i> (Bishop Miega)
12th Grade SAI:	GOLD Medal - <i>Sound Check</i> (Augusta)
12th Grade SAI:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Girls in Pearls</i> (St. James Academy)
12th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>The Belles in Bows</i> (St. James Academy)
12th Grade SAI:	SILVER Medal - <i>The Singers in Sweaters</i> (St. James Academy)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Accidentals</i> (Olathe Northwest)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Guys in Ties</i> (St. James Academy)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>Madd Lads</i> (Lawrence)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>Triple Deluxe</i> (Olathe North)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>The World's Largest Trio</i> (Augusta)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>Fresh Cut Four</i> (Gardner-Edgerton)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Joey and the Mama's Boys</i> (Olathe Northwest)
12th Grade BHS:	GOLD Medal - <i>The Boogie Dudes</i> (Bishop Miega)
12th Grade BHS:	SILVER Medal - <i>Tempo Tantrums</i> (Olathe South)

SAVE THE DATE - Harmony Explosion! 2021 is scheduled for Saturday, February 20 at Grace United Methodist Church in Olathe, KS, and the featured quartet is Harmonium. I can't wait to see you there next year!

HARMONY EXPLOSION! WINNERS FOR 2020!



8th Grade Mixed:
GOLD Medal - Faithful Four
Prairie Star



8th Grade Mixed:
GOLD Medal - Harmonic Mix
Prairie Star



8th Grade Mixed:
GOLD Medal - Change Your Tune
Prairie Star



8th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - The Hamiltones
California Trail



8th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - We're Lookin' Fine
Oregon Trail



8th Grade BHS:
SILVER Medal - The Quirky Quarter Notes
Oregon Trail



8th Grade Mixed:
SILVER Medal - Under the C
Oregon Trail



10th Grade SAI:
GOLD Medal - Sole Sisters
St. James Academy



10th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - Dapper Dolls
Bishop Miege



10th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - 4-Way Stop
Bishop Miege



10th Grade BHS:
SILVER Medal - The Close Shaves Olathe
Northwest



10th Grade Mixed:
SILVER Medal - Fourtissimos
Bishop Miege



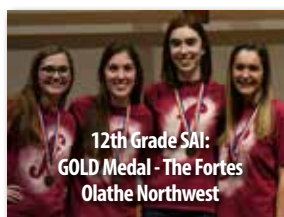
10th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - Blastin' Babes of Barbershop
Lawrence



10th Grade SAI:
Exhibition Only - Christie's Cups Crew
Bishop Miege

CONGRATULATIONS!

HARMONY EXPLOSION! WINNERS FOR 2020!



12th Grade SAI:
GOLD Medal - The Fortes
Olathe Northwest



12th Grade SAI:
GOLD Medal - The Dreamgirlz
Bishop Miege



12th Grade SAI:
GOLD Medal - Sound Check
Augusta



12th Grade SAI:
GOLD Medal - The Girls in Pearls
St. James Academy



12th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - The Belles in Bows
St. James Academy



12th Grade SAI:
SILVER Medal - The Singers in Sweaters
St. James Academy



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - The Accidentals
Olathe Northwest



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - The Guys in Ties
St. James Academy



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - Madd Lads
Lawrence



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - Triple Deluxe
Olathe North



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - The World's Largest Trio
Augusta



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - Fresh Cut Four
Gardner-Edgerton



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - The Joey and the Mama's Boys
Olathe Northwest



12th Grade BHS:
GOLD Medal - The Boogie Dudes
Bishop Miege



12th Grade BHS:
SILVER Medal - Tempo Tantrums
Olathe South

HARMONY EXPLOSION!



"I WAS THE LUCKY ONE TO SING WITH THE AMAZING MONTY DUERKSEN!"

By Matt Bostick

I was about four years old when I had my first barbershop experience; singing with my mom, dad, and two sisters at church where I stood in front of the congregation with my back to the audience. Nothing truly compares to singing with your family. It's where you experience pure joy and love. I reflect on that same joy and love thinking back to when I got to sing with two great barbershoppers: **Darrell McCune** and **Dick Henderson**; but to sing with my father-in-law, **Monty Duerksen** was so special to me.

He never failed to make me smile when we were together. He would always say, "I'm singing with the amazing **Matt Bostick**!" When really it was the other way around - I was the lucky one to sing with the amazing Monty Duerksen!

Whenever we would travel down to Wichita or Newton for family events, he would always bring a whole box filled with folders of music to sing, especially hymns, with his family. His brother **Dillard** and nephew **Dave Duerksen** would join him to entertain all who would listen.

Not too long ago, when he was in the assisted living facility, he wanted to get me, **Jill**, and Monty's oldest daughter, **Angie**, to work on music so we could tour other facilities to perform for the residents. He would even say, "We could make some money!"

I so loved his enthusiasm and desire to always want people to be happy and smiling. "Joy" is who Monty was and I can honestly say that I never saw him angry...well maybe a little bit frustrated with a snow-blower he had that wouldn't start; so he gave it to me. I have so many great memories of Monty and could go on and on about him.

I have such a love for Monty that will last for the rest of my days. I know that so many others have similar stories about him and it is a blessing that we get to carry those memories with us throughout life. We really miss Monty and occasionally catch ourselves crying one moment and then laughing another because of the joy he brought to our lives. Monty always left people happy and smiling. What a legacy he created. ♥



MONROE CLYDE DUERKSEN

1933-2020

By Ron McIntire



He was the rich bass voice of *Gentlemen of Note*, the Society's 2001 International Seniors Quartet 3rd-place medalist. He sang with the late **Rod Rule** (tenor), **Jon Gathright** (lead) and **Rich Huyck** (baritone). They represented CSD in the International Seniors Quartet Contest

in Jacksonville Florida in 2001 and garnered 3rd-place medals. When Rod died, **Mike Mathieu** filled in for awhile. **Carter Combs** took Mike's place and they re-formed the quartet as *Command Performance*. Monty was one of the funniest performers ever to come out of HOA. His rubber face, droll stories and double-billed ball cap helped keep the quartet always in demand. He carried his great humor and personality into all his chapter dealings.

Monty was born in Hillsboro, Kansas, and grew up in Lehigh Township, about 20 miles east of McPherson. His family moved to Newton, Kansas when he was in the sixth grade where he continued his education and graduated from Newton high school in 1951. He went on to receive a biology and pre-med degree from Bethel College in Lindsborg, Kansas. In his private life, for years he was a pharmaceutical salesman and, for a time parlayed his rich voice into being an auctioneer.

Monty became interested in barbershop music in high school singing lead in his first quartet, the *Newtones*. He joined the Newton Kansas Chapter in 1949 and when the Army called he found himself in Fort Carson Colorado where he recruited three other guys to form his first society quartet, the *Spring Singers*. Director Emeritus **Jim Bagby** recalls that he first heard the *Spring Singers* when his grandfather dug out a reel-to-reel movie of the quartet. Jim was 11 years old at the time and it was the first time he had heard a barbershop quartet. Monty was later stationed in Fort Belvoir, Virginia and sang with the *Alexandria Harmonizers*. By 1957, after the Army, he was directing the Newton chorus. In 1960, he joined the Emporia, Kansas Chapter and from 1970 through 1985 he directed the Emporia Chorus in two separate stints. There he put on some very successful youth clinics. One of those young singers bitten by the barbershop bug was Monty's daughter **Jill**. She later arranged HOA's *Singing Valentine* intro, written by HOA former member, now deceased, **Bob Haupt**.

In 1989, Monty joined the Kansas City Chapter to sing with the *Heart of America Chorus*. When he joined HOA, he planned to limit his

chapter activities to standing on the risers. But he soon was drafted into helping develop the HOA Singing Valentine program. Monty's daughter Jill is a *Kansas City Sweet Adeline* and is married to HOA member **Matt Bostick**.

Over the years, Monty has sung in 12 quartets by his count. Two quartets, the *Spring Singers*, and the *Four Cavaliers* qualified to represent their respective districts in international competition. The *Spring Singers* represented the Rocky Mountain District, and the *Four Cavaliers*, the Central States District. The *Cavaliers* sang a number of Sundays for *Truck-Trailer Supply Company* of Stafford, Kansas. A video, circulating on the chapter HOANet, gives the viewer a taste of Monty with the *Cavaliers* and includes past member, now deceased, **Frazier Allen**, singing tenor, and Monty singing bass.

After he retired, Monty took a job as a cashier in a local Price Chopper grocery store. His personality and friendliness was sought after by customers who preferred his checkout register because he always sent them away with a smile. The company recognized his customer service excellence and presented him with a "Front End Teammate" Award.

At the end of his career, and living in an assisted living facility, Monty often gathered his sister Angie, daughter Jill, and son-in-law Matt Bostick to work on music for entertaining other facilities. In May 2019, a number of his barbershop family presented him with his 70-year membership card at the facility.

He loved people and people loved him.

Monroe "Monty" Duerksen, died February 25, 2020 at Homestead Memory Care in Olathe, Kansas. He was 86. Monty was laid to rest in Leavenworth National Cemetery beside his wife, **Shirley**.

Thirty members of HOA sang, *I Believe* and *Friends* at his funeral. Always leave them happy and smiling, Monty. ❤️

Some information for this obituary was taken from Monty Duerksen's published Obituary from McGilley & Hoge Johnson County Memorial Chapel, Overland Park, KS, Kansas City Chapter Harmonotes article published in March 2006, and Barbershop Harmony Society, Harmonizer, July-August 2019 issue, pg 16.

CALVIN M. YODER

1946-2020

"Arguably the best ballad singer ever. . ." — Gary Parker, bass, *Dealers Choice*

By Jim Bagby, RR4 Baritone



Missouri dairy farmer **Calvin** is going to be remembered a lot of ways. **Gary's** overly effusive evaluation obviously is based primarily on the *Rural Route 4* signature

ballad, "Tie Me To Your Apron Strings Again," which has a history of its own. *Vocal Majority* guru **Jim Clancy** said of *Apron Strings* at the 1986 contest, "It was nothing like we'll ever hear again."

But we were mostly a comedy quartet outside the contest stage. Calvin was a third-generation farmer who wore overalls the way the rest of us wear jeans. Being at ease and funny was part of his nature, even when he didn't intend it.

In fact, at that same convention in Salt Lake City, the Osmond Brothers were presented Lifetime Recognition by the *BHS*. We were onstage right after them and we passed backstage. After our quick howdys, them in their sequins and us in our overalls, Calvin giggled as we waited in the wings: "I wonder what they'd say if they could see me in my everyday clothes?"

But I got ahead of myself. In a glorious 48-year friendship with this guy, the question I got asked the most was "Did he really sing in a silo?" Lots of versions of that story went around, but yeah, he sure did. When the Yoder Brothers put in a new three-story grain bin one year outside their milk barn, Calvin was the first occupant. He took great delight in telling us how he sang the first few bars of a tag, measure by measure, top note to bottom. He experimented to make the tenor note the loudest, so it still was ringing when he got to the bass. Imagine how the chord rang and bounced around that 4,000-bushel metal sound chamber!

It was not the first time he harmonized alone. Growing up and driving a A-CWD tractor for his dad, he'd sing a hymn accompanied by the pitch of the transmission as

he plowed, then lean on the brake when he needed to alter the pitch of the transmission hum. With the engine running wide open for plowing, he wasn't the only one who heard the altered pitch and here would come his dad trotting toward the field hollering "Calvin, lay off the dadburn brake."



Willard (left) and Calvin at work on the farm, in front of a silage bag they just filled, in a *Kansas City Star* article from the mid-1980s. Photo courtesy of *Star*.



During RR4 performance on 2004 HOA show, year quartet retired. Photo by Matt Bostick.



Backstage at AIC show as part of 2011 International BHS Convention in Kansas City, where tuxedo-dad **Suntones** celebrated the 50th anniversary of winning the gold and RR4 performed on their 25th anniversary. AIC Photo.

In later years at his first and only Harmony College, he told that story to Physics of Sound wizard **Jim Richards**, and the late *BHS* Hall of Fame member would repeat it often, laughing heartily. In fact, in the faculty lounge, Jim told us Calvin was the most enthusiastic student he could remember.

Not surprising, because Cal's brain was a reservoir of harmony. When the quartet that became the first *RR4* was in its infancy, Calvin was gifted a record of our 1968 champion *Western Continentals*. He took two of their songs off the record and taught them by rote to tenor **Everett Roth**, baritone **Rufus Kenagy** and his bass brother **Willard**.

At the aforementioned Harmony College, at Missouri Western in the mid-80s, you could take four major courses and one mini-course. I'd been on the faculty for a number of years, so Calvin and I poured over the catalogue to see how he could possibly narrow it down; he wanted it all. He asked if he could take an arranging class. That normally requires a prerequisite, but he had written some things for the Garden City Easter Cantata that he directed since 1971 — as long as the *RR4* had been around.

So he signed up for Arranging One. Sure enough, on the first day, instructor **Steve Jamison** gave everyone a chord test: name this chord, spell this chord, what note is missing in this chord, etc. Too technical for Cal. The idea is to weed out those who are not really prepared to jump into arranging. Those guys are advised to go back and take Fundamentals of Music. Makes sense, and

Calvin said ok and departed for the basic class, which was very helpful.

BUT, that very night, Calvin was woodshedding with **Burt Szabo, Bill Meyers, Tom Gentry** and some of the

veterans — not only holding his own but sometimes nudging them toward some chord choices. He stopped and said, “I wish Steve could see what I can hear.”

Tenor **Don Kahl** recalls Calvin’s reaction when *RR4* did the Alexandria, Va., show and we were treated to the Washington, DC, sights. Don says that when Cal saw the Washington Monument, his observation was: “They done drove the wrong end of that thing in the ground.” That was a great weekend for us because Alexandria won their first of their four international chorus championships with us in 1986. The *Harmonizers* show was in iconic Constitution Hall. When we walked on stage, Calvin gazed out and gee whizzed, “Wow, you sure could stack a lotta hay in here!”

Some of my fondest Calvin recollections center on food. He loved to eat — anything. On one commercial flight we were served boiled brussels sprouts. Had the taste and consistency of hard rubber balls. Even tenor Don Kahl, who is an EATER, passed. But when we passed our plates back in, Cal grabbed all our leftovers.

Another Sunday flight home came back through Chicago O’Hare and was — say it with me — delayed. We found we’d be two hours late, which means another 90 minutes at least home from there to the Yoder Cass County home southeast of Kansas City. The wives had expected us home for supper.

So we all found pay phones (remember those?) en route to the coffee shop and called home to see if the wives were gonna wait to feed us or if we should eat there. Result: some of us ate and some of us snacked. Since we’re still on the *RR4* dime, I opted for a great holdover: margarita and shrimp cocktail. “That’s it!” Calvin piped up to the waitress. “I’ll have a shrimp cocktail and a root beer float.”

We were close to the kitchen doors and while waiting for our order, we could see them peaking out, giggling and pointing at our table.

When I first joined the quartet in late 1976, there was not even a fast food place in Harrisonville, the closest town to the Yoder home in rural Garden City, Mo. So the first show I did with the quartet we boarded a Cessna 172 piloted by Willard, they were eager to get to our Iowa destination to eat at an Arby’s. I was the newbie so I didn’t say anything.

But the next show, this city slicker suggested strongly that the host folks were paying for our meals, we deserved to upgrade our pre-show meal to a steak. And virtually every small town in the CSD has a good steak house. We asked our host to point us to one. So there we were. The waitress asked Calvin what he wanted and he said “Steak.” She said “What kind?” He said (wait for it) “Beef steak.”

Calvin and Willard’s dad, Walter, had been a butcher. As they explained it to me, he would slaughter a cow, hang it up and from it get basically roasts, canned beef, hamburger, odds and ends or STEAKS. So Calvin’s answer made perfect sense to him. It was Walter’s Mennonite quartet, incidentally, that was the inspiration for the *RR4*.

But there were things Cal would rather do than eat. We often chartered if we were within flying distance of home, so the brothers could get back to the barn in time for morning milking. It was not unusual for us to leave an afterglow at 1 a.m. or so, land around 4 a.m., with the Yoders going straight to the barn and then to church.

If the show site was too far to get home on Saturday night, we usually arranged to do a Sunday morning church service somewhere. More about that in a moment. And most of those were followed by potluck dinners — the best tradeoff for missing some extra sleep!

I mention this because we were at a Mennonite church where the Yoders had lots of friends, the food was marvelous and we were chowing down before we had to catch our flight — except for Calvin. His plate was piled high, as usual, but it was still on the table as time approached for us to leave for our flight. We kept hollering at him to come eat or he was gonna be awful hungry on the flight. But he was off in a corner teaching tags.

So Calvin was a head-to-toe farmer, a compelling ballad singer, the lead of quartet hired to do comedy routines and a feller who leaves us with lots of memories about food. Those are all secondary to the characteristic that any family member, friend or even casual acquaintance would likely mention first. He loved God and his Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church. Enthusiastically and happily.

He was the most Christian person I’ve ever known, and more than any minister I’ve had, he had the most influence on my life. The *RR4* closed every show with “(I Woke Up This Mornin’) Feelin’ Fine” until we got **Earl Moon’s** “Richest Man in the World (Humpback Mule).” Our first recording, Saturday Night and Sunday Mornin’ was barbershop songs on one side and spirituals, gospel and hymns on the other.

After the AIC got word that Calvin had entered hospice, he was awash in uplifting messages, good wishes and calls from his fellow champs. His response was pure Calvin. I’ll share just a little of what he wrote back on the AIC net:

“I don’t feel like I deserve all the accolades, but I’m so happy that I could have been an encouragement of some sort or another to so many of you along the way. . . I am so grateful that God has given me peace beyond measure. It’s overwhelming. . . I can tell you now that Jesus had given me a perfect peace and just a perfect sense of comfort.”



Calvin on 2011 AIC show.
Photo courtesy of
Matt Bostick

Calvin passed away peacefully the afternoon of April 22 in his home, with his family gathered around his bed, singing.

Fred Farrell, tenor of *Crossroads* and *2nd Edition*, wrote: "Bittersweet knowing that we've lost Calvin, but having his kind of peace and perspective is what we all aspire to."

Gotcha and *139th Street* bass **Jim Kline** said, "Many of us are loved. Calvin was beloved. I will never forget his enthusiasm for life and how he humbly shared it with everyone. . ."

Singing With The Champs!

Heroes and me where it all began

By Joe Mathieu

I'm pretty sure I have more *Rural Route 4* videos on YouTube than anyone in the universe and am getting a lot of views on them today. One of my favorites is from the sing with the champs event from a few years ago.

I was program vp at the time and it was the chapter's 75th anniversary and I had an idea to get all the past district champs of the chorus together to celebrate. Guys in the chapter could pay/donate to sing with the past district quartet champs of the chorus. This was a much bigger undertaking than I had anticipated at the time, but it ended up being well worth it. I knew in order for this to be HUGE that I'd have to get the *RR3* to participate. I knew **Jim Bagby** would be in, but for some reason I was nervous about selling it to **Calvin** and **Willard** to get their buy-in. They were the first three I contacted because I knew if I could get them that the rest of the champs would follow suit, which is exactly what happened. The only way to get a hold of Calvin and Willard was the old fashioned home telephone. I remember calling them and giving them my pitch and being really nervous about it since it had been a few years since I had talked to them. My fears were unfounded because they were both "in" IMMEDIATELY. I promised I would keep them in the loop prior to the event. I remember calling each of them every week to remind them and to give them the latest scoop and I even called them the night before to make sure they were still planning on it. They probably thought I was quite annoying at this point!

I go watch videos from that night on YouTube whenever I am feeling down in the dumps and it lifts my spirits. I guess Calvin and Willard are kind of notorious about showing up to sing without really warming up or anything prior to getting there. My favorite video of the night is them singing "Feelin' Fine" with my brother **Rob**. This was one of the first songs out of the gate that night and Calvin was pretty out of breath but he still nailed it. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwulRN2r9Jw>. ♥

"A true Giant in stature, heart and voice. Calvin's inclusion in the AIC raised the bar for us all. God love him as we all do and "tie him to your apron strings again!" –

Dr. Ben Ayling, bass, *The Ritz*. ♥



RIP Calvin Yoder

By Joe Mathieu

Kansas City area barbershoppers know what he meant to barbershop and music in general. I've known him since 1984 or so when I was still a kid. I joined the chorus here in 1987, the year after they won. The *Rural Route 4* are my barbershop heroes. All around they represented what gold medalists should be. Calvin always was accommodating to let me to sing with them whether I was a kid or a 46 year old adult. Even when they retired as an active quartet they would pop up from time to time to sing all their classics at different events. We all knew the jokes but still laughed as hard as we did the first time we heard them. I wore out two "Friends and Relatives" cassette tapes. After the first one wore out, **Jim Bagby** gave me a replacement and after that one wore out he gave me a CD that is still in my car that I listen to all the time. Such a bummer that we'll never hear them live again, but we still have the videos and recordings. The last time they performed was at the society's 80th birthday celebration at the Muehlebach and I was lucky enough to get this picture with Calvin at "the shrine." The funny part was that Calvin initially didn't want to be in the picture (above)...that it should just be me with the plaque. But I insisted he be in it. One of my barbershop heroes and I "where it all began." ♥

Above: Calvin and Joe Mathieu at the historic Society anniversary plaques in the old lobby of the Hotel Muehlebach in downtown Kansas City.

Photo courtesy of Joe.

BARBERSHOP UNDERGROUND: *Join the Resistance!*

By John Braden

Fleeing a global pandemic and dispersed far and wide, brave Barbershoppers everywhere went into hiding. Clutching their pitch pipes, they crouched in the darkness, longing for the day when they might gather again in fellowship, ringing chords in church basements and beer joints across the land.

But the future looked bleak, filled with fear that, for untold weeks (dare we say months?), Barbershoppers' chief concern would be where to find enough toilet paper to sustain them through the unending crisis.

The trigger event — near the geographic center of a frightened nation — was the cancellation of the March 17, 2020, chapter meeting of the *Heart of America Barbershop Chorus*. A black day in our history. Would no one stand up to bring Barbershop to the masses?

One man stood up. Actually, he slouched in an office chair in his dimly lit bunker. He was a strange man, not too bright, and in need of a haircut.

"We shall not be cowed by this plague!" he cried, somewhat melodramatically. "As **Joe Liles** is my witness, we shall do everything possible to bring Barbershop music to a chord-starved populace! As long as it does not require money or too much actual work!"

Thus was born *Barbershop Underground*, subverting the *HOA Chorus* group e-mail to send glorious songs, sometimes shaky video, unimaginative commentary, and HOPE — to those whose chords had been broken.

It all began that very night with the transmission of a YouTube video of the legendary *Rural Route 4*, singing "Richest Man in the World" reminding the downtrodden of how rich they actually are.

Every night thereafter came another set of four-part voices singing in the darkness, starting with our hometown heroes: *Special Touch*, *12th Street Rag*, *Merry Mugs*, *Gamboliers*, *Quadrio*, *High Definition*, *Back in Business*, *Voices Unlimited*, *HOA*, *Premium Blend*, *Boom Town*, *Harmonium*.

Other heroes from far and near lent their voices (or they were "borrowed"), bringing brightness to the bleak nights: the *Cracker Jills*, *Boston Common*, the *Auto Towners*, *Crossroads*, the *Buffalo Bills*, *Ambassadors of Harmony*, *Bluegrass Student Union*, the *Four Cavaliers*, *Masterpiece*, *Gas House Gang*, *Vocal Spectrum*, the *Osmond Brothers*, *Newfangled Four*, *Keepsake*, and on and on.

The Underground also presented an interlude of **Jim Henry's** Gold Medal Moments and a special April 11, from-the-bunker Barbershop Harmony Day with video from the 80th anniversary of *BHS* and *HOA* in 2018 at the Hotel Muehlebach lobby, where Barbershop experienced its first revival.



Since the Barbershop Underground transmissions began, *HOA* members have been digging out from their bunkers — meeting at the usual 7 p.m. on Tuesday nights via Zoom video conference. "It's just a little (virtual) street where old friends meet and treat you in the same old way." (Everything's a song cue.)

If you haven't joined the Resistance, now is the time. To Zoom with *HOA*, e-mail Barry Sanders at barryDsings@gmail.com and say "Send me the next Zoom meeting link."

Until a brighter day dawns, this is Barbershop Underground, raising a light against the darkness, signing off... ❤️

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