



# Heart of America



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- Dec. 4 Holiday Show/Unity Village
- Jan. 8 Installation Awards Dinner



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**They'll be glad you did!**

November 2004

# HARMONOTES

The monthly newsletter of Kansas City's  
**Heart of America Chorus**



The second-oldest chapter in the  
Barbershop Harmony Society

*Drawn by Harmony...  
Bound by Friendship...  
Striving for Excellence!*

# TWELVE-TIME DISTRICT CHAMPIONS!

*Mission accomplished! Now it's on to Salt Lake City!*



Photo courtesy of Matt Bostick

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*Dick Korek* urges all of us to get the word out about the Holiday Show!

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# HARMONOTES

...is published by the board of directors of the Kansas City, MO., Chapter of SPEBSQSA, Inc., a non-profit organization. Unless accompanied by a byline, all articles have been written by the Editor and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the officers and members of the chapter. Space will be made available for opposing points of view.

## Heart of America Chorus

The Kansas City, MO. Chapter S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., Inc.

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Permission to reprint articles is granted to barbershop chapters as long as the author and *Harmonotes* are acknowledged.

*The utmost care was used in preparation of this newsletter.*

*However, should you notice erroneous copy, please let the Editor know! Comments/submissions may be made to:*

**Todd Anderson**  
 17905 East 24th Terrace Court S  
 Independence, MO 64057-1332  
 (816) 373-8633  
 Harmonotes@comcast.net

### CHAPTER INFORMATION

Chapter meets at 7:00 P.M. each Tuesday night, at St. Peter's United Church of Christ  
 110th & Holmes · Kansas City, MO 64105

HOA Website: www.hoachorus.com  
 Web Address: webstaff@hoachorus.com  
 Chapter Telephone: (816) 221-7888

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## REACHING OUR GOALS

by Marty Oldehoeft, Chapter President

Shortly after the trip to Louisville our chapter board and music team said we have a goal set for us this fall. The goal was actually in place long before the trip south. We have had a year or two of excellent outside coaching. We have within our own chorus those who understand what it takes from week to week to put those coaching techniques in place as part of our regular singing practice. Oh, sure we need reminding, but that's part of the "practice makes permanent" idea. So the goal was to win the district competition. Well the news is out, and yes—by golly—we did win the district trophy. What a thrill it was at the time of the announcement and will be a part of our chorus history that HOA was the CENTRAL STATES DISTRICT CHAMPION CHORUS for 2004. We will now live up to that title by continuing our strive for excellence. Our sincere hope is to go to Salt Lake next July and represent the CSD, singing and performing even better than this fall. *Congratulations, CHAMPS!* ♥

## Heart of America Chorus

**TWELVE-TIME Central States District Champion!**

### CHAPTER QUARTET CHAMPIONS

- Rural Route 4 - 1986 International Champion**  
 Don Kahl (tenor), Calvin Yoder (lead), Jim Bagby (bari), Willard Yoder (bass)
- Gentlemen of Note - 2001 International Seniors Medallists**  
 Rod Rule (tenor), Jon Gathright (lead), Rich Huyck (bari), Monty Duerksen (bass)
- HyPower Serenaders - 1948 Central States District Champion**  
 Don McPherson (tenor), Ben Franklin (lead), Bert Phelps (bari), Dale Warrick (bass)
- Gambolliers - 1952 Central States District Champion**  
 John Dooley (tenor), Eddie Schliebs (lead), Orval Wilson (bari), Jimmy Byrnes (bass)
- BMA Gambolliers - 1957 Central States District Champion**  
 Barney Wasson (tenor), Eddie Schliebs (lead), Orval Wilson (bari), Harold Robinette (bass)
- The Kippers - 1962 Central States District Champion**  
 \*Ken Gabler (tenor), \*Tom Taylor (lead), John Goldsbury (bari), Don Page (bass)
- The Four Kippers - 1966 Central States District Champion**  
 \*Ken Gabler (tenor), \*Byron Meyers (lead), John Goldsbury (bari), Gil Lefholz (bass)
- The Morning Times - 1974 Central States District Champion**  
 Dave Snook (tenor), Roger O'Dell (lead), Steve Leone (bari), Stan Grossman (bass)
- Corner Quartet - 1981 Central States District Champion**  
 Don Kahl (tenor), Lance Heilmann, (lead) Steve Leone (bari), Stan Grossman (bass)
- Harmony Spectrum - 1982 Central States District Champion**  
 Gene Bowers (tenor), David Krause (lead), Jim Bagby (bari), Willard Yoder (bass)
- Special Touch - 1984 Central States District Champion**  
 \*Rick Kready (tenor), David Krause (lead), \*Bud Clark (bari), Matt Moore (bass)
- KC Connection - 1986 Central States District Champion**  
 Rod Rule (tenor), Wayne Lankenau (lead), Rich Huyck (bari), Larry Wilson (bass)
- 12th Street Rag - 1994 Central States District Champion**  
 \*Rick Kready (tenor), Mark Fortino (lead), John Fortino (bari), Keith Schweer (bass)

### OTHER CHAPTER QUARTETS

- 12th Street Rag - 2000 International Semi-Finalists**  
 \*Micah Jeppesen (tenor), Mark Fortino (lead), John Fortino (bari), \*Barry Moore (bass)
- Crosstown Four**  
 Dale Neuman (tenor), Gordon Coleman (lead), Ron Abel (bari), Val Putzier (bass)
- Grandstand**  
 Rob Mathieu (tenor), David Krause (lead), \*Jeff Veteto (bari), \*Adam Veteto (bass)
- Mother's Guys**  
 Rob Mathieu (tenor), and Mike Mathieu (lead) Rick Mathieu (bari), Joe Mathieu (bass)
- New and Used Parts**  
 Jerry Garrard (tenor), Mike Neff (lead), Grant Hunget (bari), Keith Schweer (bass)
- Rewind**  
 Marlin Weidler (tenor), Thom Tisdall (lead), Dick Irwin (bari), \*J.B. Witham (bass)
- Sound Alibi**  
 Tom Elefson (tenor), Jerry Garrard (lead), Shawn Jeffries (bari), Darrell McCune (bass)
- Sounds Like Treble**  
 Niel Johnson (tenor), Rob Varney (lead), Al Fehlauer (bari) and \*Bill Bay (bass)
- SureFire!**  
 Carter Combs (tenor), Mike Neff (lead), Grant Hunget (bari), Don Young (bass)
- The Buzz**  
 Mike Troyer (tenor) Jason Eggers (lead), Kalin Tapp (bari) and Mike Louque (bass)
- Tone-Henge**  
 Bruce Wenner (tenor), Dan Henry (lead), Jim Bagby (bari), Keith Schweer (bass)

\*Member of other chapters

## YOUR CHORUS MANAGER SPEAKS! by Vince Perry



### Salt Lake City Registrations!

Okay champ, you've gone and done IT and now you have to start thinking about SLC. (Such a nice consequence!) I have already had several guys approach me about ticketing for SLC. The best information I have at this time is that only tickets (registrations) bought together in the HOA group order will be seated together. This is a change from what I told you last year. But not a change in how the Int'l Office actually filled our

online orders for *Loovul*. Early bird prices are still in effect until the end of the year and I will be accepting your orders (with payment) until Dec. 29. I will then fax in our group order. Prices have increased this year. Early bird prices are: adult \$115 and junior (under 12) \$60. We can accept MasterCard or Visa or checks. If you give me your credit card order today, please be assured that your card will not be run before Dec. 29. In addition, if between now and then you need to change your order (add or delete) you will be able to do so by simply contacting me. So, what are you waiting for? Order now, pay later, can't beat a deal like that!

### Hotels in SLC!

The familiarization trip for SLC is scheduled for the weekend of Nov. 21. **Mike Mathieu** (now the new Event's Chair for International Conventions (let's congratulate him!) and I will be making the trip. The hotel we get depends upon the luck of the draw and of course the choices by the other choruses ahead of us in the selection process. We lucked out last year with a selection number of five. Keep your fingers crossed for a similar outcome this year.

### Just a couple of common thoughts!

As you chorus manager I am always seeking ways to better communicate with you about important issues. As you know I avoid standing in front of you weekly and rambling on about things that are presented to you in other media. I also filter the information I give to you as to timeliness and need to know. This being said, I can not always anticipate your reasons for advanced information so you may at times find it necessary to contact me about particular issues. With 98% of you connected to the internet and receiving email, it is imperative that you not only read your email from your chorus manager, but you must read the email for content since many times a chorus email contains more than one main topic. Look for words that ask for ACTION on your part. Members with no email should adopt an email buddy and ask him weekly if there have been any impor-

tant issues transmitted through the HOA-Net. (If anyone that does not have email would like to meet and discuss what it takes to get online and receiving email, please let me know. I or a couple of other guys you know, will be happy to meet with you one-on-one and discuss costs and provide hands-on guidance to get you going.)

Signups—this chorus has lots of signups!! We have on-line signups and on-the-table signups. Signups are healthy signs of an active organization and a vital tool for providing the leadership of the chapter with the necessary information for successful planning and coordination. I want to thank all the guys that I call first responders; these are the guys that signup within seconds of the email message soliciting their signup. Most recently **Mike Schumacher, Dick Irwin, Bob Howard, and Al Fehlauer** have led the way. Naturally we always want you to participate in all activities but realistically we know that is not always possible. So to help out it has been our policy on signups to provide for you a choice of non-participation. Remember, whatever signup information you give is helpful. One reason I get time after time for a person not signing up is "I already thought I signed up." This is understandable but in future please remember that throughout any signup campaign you can always check our master sign-up tally list online through our *Member's Page* to determine your chorus manager's take on your signup status. And if you find the status blank or incorrect you can send a change to me in a matter of seconds. Signups are kind of like ordering registrations for SLC, do 'em early, you can always change 'em later.

### Touch & Check Uniform lists for Omaha!

I haven't checked with **Brooke**, but from my vantage point this may be the first time in recent years that everybody made it to contest with all the uniform parts which indicates that you really did *Touch & Check*. Congratulations! And congratulations to all for your total cooperation and championship attitude throughout the entire weekend. Friday night LATE you were champions in the rehearsal room. I was so proud of you for coming together with such fervor and camaraderie. I knew then that Saturday would be special day. And a special day it was. Congratulations and thanks to each and every one of you for making Omaha 2004 a very special time: Central States District 2004 AAA Chorus Champions—ooh, I like the sound of that. But more so, I like the way it feels! ♥



## LOOKING LIKE CHAMPS

by Brooke Meyers, Uniform Chairman

While in Omaha I had breakfast with **Lud Einess** and he kindly observed, "You're very dedicated to the uniform chairman job." I hadn't given it much thought but I do take the responsibility seriously and really have had a lot of fun doing it. I believe it is up to our directors and coaches to help us perform like champions. The "uniform guy" helps us look like champions. But, let there be no mistake, to be successful it takes a team effort, involving virtually every chorus member.

I do want to thank a number of people who helped pull together "the look" we put on stage for contest and the Saturday night show. Of course I want to recognize again **Mary Fortino** and all the *Heartbeats* who have done so much to help with uniforms. Sometimes it takes a special effort for a *Heartbeat* just to make sure her singer has all his stuff gathered, ready to go and packed. **Al Higgins** and **Kevin Tritsch** helped with folding hankies and **Mike Schumacher** and **Roy Manade** helped distribute them. Many of you helped pick up and distribute the uniforms before Louisville. All of you are to be congratulated for arriving in Omaha with everything you needed.

Of course, we didn't have 100% of the chorus with 100% of their uniform pieces but we were darn close and I'm confident we'll hit the mark next time around. Thanks champs! ♥

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the following chapter members!

- Kenneth Neujahr November 3**
- Albert Higgins November 7**
- Fred Lockard November 10**
- Dick Korek November 20**
- Colin Smalley November 20**
- Dick Winter November 21**
- Tom Millot November 22**
- Brooke Meyers November 23**
- Jerry Snyder November 23**
- Mike O'Dell November 24**
- Todd Anderson November 28**
- Vince Perry November 28**
- Paul Winans November 29**

## GRANDSTAND PLACES SECOND (AGAIN) by David Krause



Photo courtesy of Matt Bostick

Oh, well. We still had a great time and it was wonderful to get so much support from our chapters. Actually, that placing second is getting to be a habit for yours truly. I started writing this stuff down a few years ago because at my age and after 14 different competing quartets it's getting to be difficult to remember. I've now placed second in the district quartet contest 5 times, along with 2 thirds, 2 fourths, a fifth and 2 championships.

Our quartet is also busy getting several district shows this spring, a couple of nice in-town gigs, and a fun show coming up this weekend with the retiring great quartet called *The Gas House Gang*. Now that will really be fun.

Congrats to the chorus and best of luck in prep for international. Also, congrats to all of the quartet competitors, because just competing is a success. Special best wishes to our good friends and new champs, *Vocal Spectrum*. Can't think of too many district champs who've done it in such style as those guys and it should be fun watching them get even better in the coming years. ♥





Photo courtesy of Matt Bostick

## MUSICAL NOTES

by Keith Schweer, Music Vice President



**C**entral States District Champions! Sounds great, doesn't it? For the first time since 1992, the *Heart of America Chorus* is the district champ. It's about time, don't you think? I'm very proud of all of us for what we've accomplished. Everyone worked very hard and we achieved our goal. But, that's not the end. It's just the next step along the way for HOA. By winning, we qualified to represent our district at the International Contest in Salt

Lake City next July. Our goal, as it was this year, will be to place in the top 10. We will continue on the road to improvement during the coming months. We'll continue to have lots of outside coaching to improve our singing and performance capabilities and we'll try to take advantage of all the talent we have within our chapter.

I'm hoping we can take 100 or more to Salt Lake City. Do you have singing friends or acquaintances that might like to be a part of our chorus? Why not invite them to come out on a Tuesday night? I'm sure they'd have a good time and they just might catch the fever. We had a terrific Guest Night a few weeks ago, organized by **Steve Carruthers**. But, Steve needs our help. Why wouldn't someone want to be a part of a championship chorus? ♥

## THIS TIME...NO STROKE

by Dick Irwin



**A**fter my wonderful experience a couple of days after our performance in Louisville, I was so very happy to get through the Tuesday after Omaha without having any medical problems, like, no stroke... Yea!

Our win in Omaha was special for me in another way. It was my second district championship in my second district. I was with the *Great Northern Union* in 1996 when they won the Land 'O' Lakes contest. What was different? This one was harder fought. In 1996 we were expected to win hands down, and did. The next closest chorus wasn't even close. This time, as I'm sure a lot of you did, I was sitting in the audience watching the *Barber Boys* do their set. I was very impressed and not just a little afraid that they had done what they needed to beat HOA. It was such a relief when I saw Jim hesitate before announcing second place that I almost jumped up and yelled right then.

Gentlemen, I am a district champion with one of the finest groups I have ever been a part of. It was an honor to perform with each and every one of you in Omaha, as it was in Louisville, as it will be in Salt Lake City. We are only a handful of points from the top 10. It's time we realized that we belong in this elite group of choruses and move ourselves up by reaching for that next rung. If we believe, we achieve! ♥

## ONE OF HOA'S GREATEST ASSETS, ...AND THE CSD'S NEWEST HALL OF FAME MEMBER!

# MONTY DUERKSEN

**Monty Duerksen** was seated at the Central States District championship, listening to the description of the 2004 inductee into Barbershop's Hall of Fame. He remembered thinking that some of the accomplishments they were listing...sounded like they belonged to him. But no, that just couldn't be. *But it was*. His name was announced and Monty began the long surprise trip down the aisle to a standing ovation from every member in attendance.

Upon hearing of this huge honor, I solicited and found information on Monty's many barbershop accomplishments. I had no idea what I had asked for and soon discovered a lifetime of effort. As you read the following list, you'll quickly see how easy it was to determine Monty's place among the select few that merit placement in the CSD's Hall of Fame. Here goes:

In 55 years as a Society member, Monty has sung in eleven different quartets, including his high school quartet—the *NewTones*—and his college quartet. One of those quartets—the *Cavaliers*—placed as high as second at district contest. Other foursomes included *Personal Touch*, *KC Harmonizers*, *Notable Heritage* and, of course, . . . *Gentlemen of Note*, who won the senior district quartet contest and placed third during the 2001 senior international contest.

He sang in a quartet, called the *Spring Singers*, while serving in the Army, in Colorado Springs. Something interesting about this quartet: This was the quartet that **Jim Bagby** heard when he discovered barbershop for the first time—on a reel-to-reel tape recorded by Grandma Bagby.

Monty directed the *Emporia Flint Hills Chorus*. He started the Young Men in Harmony program there, bringing in clinicians such as **Greg Lyne** and **Joe Liles**. He also started several YMIH quartets such as his daughter **Jill's** first quartet. . . when she was just in fifth grade.



**Holding the honor close to his heart, Monty Duerksen receives a well-deserved spot within the CSD's Hall of Fame!**

Monty was instrumental in organizing Society competition within the State of Kansas.

He served as Master of Ceremonies for barbershop and Sweet Adeline shows in Hays, McPherson, Emporia, Valley Center, Wichita, Halstead, Hutchinson, Manhattan, Marion and Chanute.

In 1973, Monty organized a Christmas Spectacular, in which he had all the Kansas choruses gather in Emporia...to benefit Wichita's Institute of Logopedics.

Since joining HOA, Monty has been instrumental in growing the Singing Valentine program as well as the membership. He has won numerous for bringing the most new members both in the chorus and in the district.

He has been both barbershopper of the month AND the year . . . in two chapters.

*Whew!* Not every accomplishment is listed, but you get the idea. Everything I've ever read or seen involving Monty Duerksen has a forward movement—a "can-do" philosophy. And his energy is contagious. Let's face it, if HOA had twenty guys who were as ecstatic about life, like Monty, nothing could ever discourage us.

Congratulations on the award, Monty! We're proud of you! ♥



**TEN YEARS AGO: NOVEMBER, 1994**

Our *Harmonotes* editor notes that "nine of the 34 quartets registered for the 1994 CSD fall quartet contest in Kansas City on Oct. 1 included at least one member from the Kansas City chapter. If the Kansas City Accord (**Weidler, Pope, Beutel, Witham**) hadn't scratched, a total of 29 HOA

By Wade Dexter, Editor Emeritus  
jedexter@mailstation.com

barbershoppers would have appeared on the competition stage. There were CHORUSES in the contest with few members on stage!" In the next paragraph, he opens, "Of course, the big news to come out of the convention this year was the fabulous first-place finish by the *12th Street Rag* (**Kready, M. Fortino, J. Fortino, Schweer**). The *Rag* becomes the 11th Kansas City quartet, going back to the 1948 *HyPower Serenaders*, to hold the CSD quartet championship." But he qualifies that a bit with, "Dare we include the *Rural Route 4*? Or were they with the old Harrisonville chapter when they won it in 1976?" Guess he should have done a bit of research on that, shouldn't he, Jim? And our director extends his congratulations to the '86 men who represented HOA so well in the October contest." Don't have the scores, but it appears that HOA finished in second place behind the *Ambassadors of Harmony*, who were destined for greater accomplishments down the road a few years.

**TWENTY YEARS AGO: NOVEMBER, 1984**

Remember those light blue tuxedos with the ruffled shirt and the cummerbund that were the chorus uniform when I joined the chapter in late 1983? I believe we wore them for the last time on our 1984 annual show. I thought they were a pretty snazzy outfit, but you fellows were apparently tired of them, so it was decided to sell them. The uniform committee, consisting of **Jim Spriggs, Connie Schweer, and Mary and Nolan Arnote**, placed an ad for the sale of the tuxes in the *Serenade*. Well, sir, they got

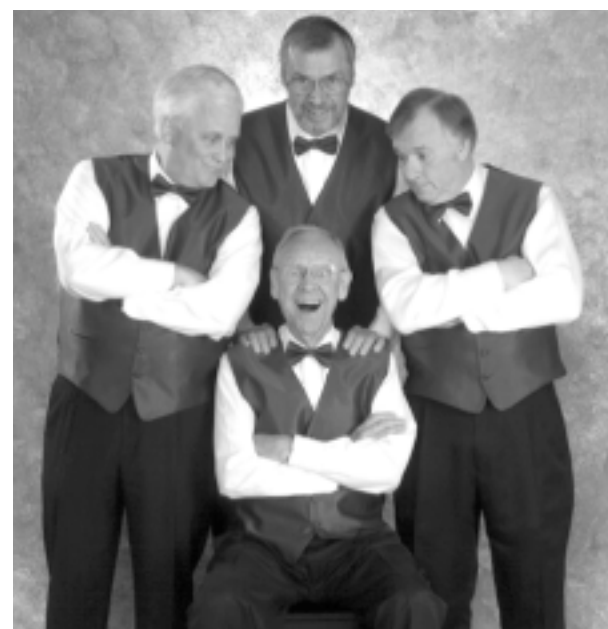
responses from chapters in Dubuque and Waterloo, Iowa; Whitehall, Michigan; Durango, Colorado; Wenh, Wisconsin (that's my home state, but I've never heard of that place); Indianapolis, Indiana; Gordonville, Fort Worth, and Fort Campbell, Texas; Peoria, Illinois; Baden, Pennsylvania; Sarasota, Florida; Montevideo and Coon Rapids, Minnesota; and even as far away as British Columbia! They were able to sell 60 to Dubuque and many others to quartets across the country. As they say, it pays to advertise.

**FORTY YEARS AGO: NOVEMBER, 1964**

Editor **Warren Edmonds** reports that two of the three quartets competing at Omaha in the district contest, make the top ten. Says Warren, "The Heart of America Chapter quartets didn't do too badly at Omaha, The *BMA Beaconaires* and *Merry Mugs* made the top ten. The *Deck-O-Chords* hit 15th in the morning eliminations with 24 quartets competing. On the evening finals, the *Beaconaires* ended up in fourth place and the *Merry Mugs* were ninth. Not bad, gang!"

I've mentioned this before in this column, but it's interesting to note how prone chapters were back 40 or so years ago to pay visits on neighboring chapters as a part of their chapter programing, something we don't do enough of any more. Warren describes how "**Orville Martin** is stuck with the job of making a big pot of chili for a meeting of the combined area chapters. The NOJOCO (now known as the Overland Park chapter), Southtown (defunct), and Kansas City chapters will get together to do a little singin' and woodsheddin' on Nov. 9, 1964, at the Johnson County Community Center." And then he mentions that the chapter would be taking a bus to St. Joseph to meet with the Pony Expressmen on Nov. 17. I remember some of those joint meetings, and they were fun, indeed.

And finally, I couldn't overlook this one. "Seems like one of Dan Henry's listeners on WDAF called him up one day prior to Omaha to ask him to bring back a bushel of apples from one of her relatives in Omaha. We'll bet Ol' Dan'l doesn't tell his audience where he is going the next time he has a day off." ♥



**NO DUST SETTLING ON TONE-HENGE**

by Ol' Bruce for *Tone-Henge*

Sunday after the HOA Retreat is a great time to come home and flop down on the couch, right? Not for *Tone-Henge*. It was (1) catch a quick lunch, (2) dress, and (3) head out for a performance. (1) and (3) worked fine, but there was a glitch on (2) – three of us wore the uniform we had agreed on previously, and one showed up in something else (we won't name the odd man out, but he is definitely better at directing a chorus than remembering things). Wouldn't you know—the gig turned out to be quite a big party, and under the circumstances we were less than thrilled to see TV cameras all over the place. It was a bash for Sunshine Biscuit folks, at the old Loose Mansion on Armour Boulevard—matter of fact, they asked us to lead them in singing "You Are My Sunshine." None of us thought of tuning in later to watch ourselves, but we heard later from friends that a segment of our out-of-uniform performance appeared on the evening Channel 4 news.

The rest of the month is more eventful for individual members than for the quartet. **Dan** missed district because of moving, so (for the first time in six years) we didn't do the hospitality rooms Saturday night. Next comes a two-week **Bagby** anniversary holiday, followed immediately by a **Bowser** cruise. We won't all be in the same place til mid-November. We'll have to rely on the time-tested *Tone-Henge* formula—rehearsal just makes you peak too soon. ♥



**GET THE WORD OUT!**

by Dick Korek,  
Marketing & PR Vice president



The Chorus is at an all-time peak and pride shines from every face.

With the "flyers" and "pocket cards" that are available for the Holiday Show everyone has the perfect tools to SELL the remaining tickets. A sell-out for both shows is just over 2,000 seats. Wow, that's only 5 to 10 tickets to sell per Adeline and HOA member. Family, work associates, neighbors and social groups will want to see and hear you perform.

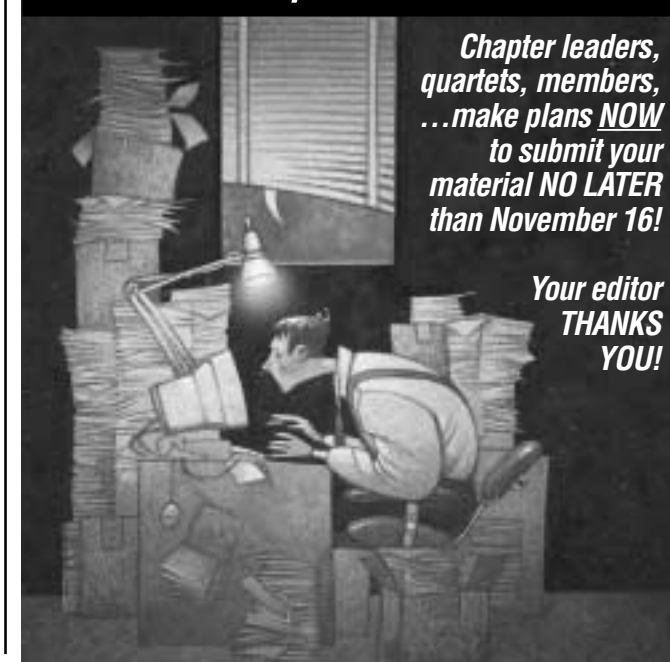
"You don't just sing?" "You do choreography?" "You have pre-teens in the chorus?" "You have how many in the chorus?" "You sing in district and international competitions?" "Your chorus gets paid for performances?" "These will be just some of the responses you will get.

What chorus members have often said is... "People just don't know about us." Well, it's up to each and every one of us to get the word out. Share the fun of this exciting hobby with everyone you know and meet.

Remember, we can proudly say, "When you see our show, you will leave with a smile on your face and a song in your heart."

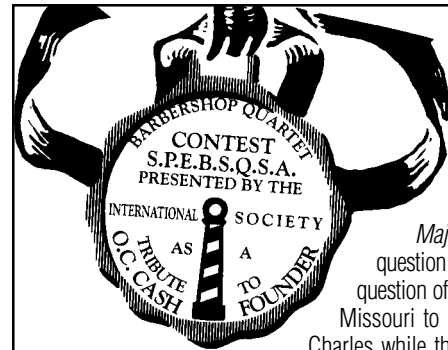
Do your family and friends a favor. Give them the opportunity to hear and see our holiday show, give them a "flyer" or "pocket card" and with a smile, just say "I'll see you there." ♥

**DECEMBER HARMONOTES DEADLINE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16!**



*Chapter leaders, quartets, members, ...make plans NOW to submit your material NO LATER than November 16!*

*Your editor THANKS YOU!*



## A VISIT TO THE AMBASSADORS OF HARMONY by Jim Porter

After my wonderful experience singing with the *Vocal Majority* in July, it was never a question of WHETHER, it was only a question of WHEN I would travel across Missouri to sing with my friends in St. Charles while they reigned as International champions. I was looking for a situation similar to the one in Dallas, which would allow me to stand on the risers with them and sing with them all evening. The Thursday after the District contest in Omaha proved to be the time. I talked about it with several of the *Ambassadors* in Omaha, and all agreed that it would be a good time, as they would be taking up their Christmas music at that time.

**Roberta** and I thus left Kansas City early in the afternoon, and arrived in St. Charles with two hours to spare. That allowed us to have a relaxing dinner together and get to the practice hall well ahead of time. This was a blessing, as it allowed me to meet most of my friends and several of the newer guys individually ahead of time. As I was there in my HOA blue shirt, sporting my lanyard with my nametag, the "I Sang with the Vocal Majority" pin, and, of course, our District championship medal, they recognized me at once, and each of them congratulated me and the HOA chorus for winning the championship. This time, I signed the guest list right away, and the guest book they gave me was nice and thin, and had only the songs they were currently planning to sing in their Christmas show. That certainly was different from Dallas! Alas, there is still no pin to give stating "I Sang with the Ambassadors of Harmony".

Several other guests were also there, including a couple that passed their auditions and were ready to join the chorus. Interestingly, they were 50-something guys, so not everyone coming into that chorus is a young guy.

Two of the guests were from the *Big Apple Chorus* in New York, who happened to be in the area (Branson?) and decided to pay a visit, just as I did. I mentioned to them that I lived in their area 2 years and sang with the Westchester County chapter, and this allowed us to hit it off pretty well right from the start. They filled me in on people I knew in Westchester, and I encouraged them to get on the risers with me, and not just sit and watch. They both did, and were there all evening, just as I was.

At length, warmups got under way, with **Kevin Keller** leading. At the time, maybe 100 guys were on hand, and it seemed that they weren't really giving their all to the warmups. I could tell right away this wasn't yet like Dallas. Kevin had to urge them to get into the program, reminding them that while they had the medals, true champions performed like champions ALL the time. This had the desired effect, and they had a good and spirited warmup session before **Jim Henry** took over and the practice began.

The first song was "Little Drummer Boy", a song they've done before in their Christmas shows, but not one I've ever sung with them. They needed enough brush-up work on it that by the time Jim was ready to have them sing it through and move on, I was able to sing along with them and feel my voice blending in. One interesting thing about the *Ambassadors* that sets them apart from the crowd, they did not go flat! Indeed, Jim Henry often checked the pitch throughout the evening and found them to even be a bit ABOVE the key!

I made it harder on myself than in Dallas—I stood in an open spot in the middle of the second row, but was surrounded by tenors, baritones and basses. All the leads are on the sides in St. Charles, and none were nearby. I suppose I could have moved, but I accepted the challenge and stayed put. I really like it better that way!

As time went on, stragglers came in and soon I was crowded in. After an hour, probably 130 were on the risers. Some things never change. That was a problem in St. Charles when I was with them 13 years ago! Indeed, most of the experience was much more like what I was used to "way back when," than the Dallas experience 3 months ago. Dallas is clearly a better disciplined chorus, and Dallas's sound is still something even St. Charles has not come up to yet. But the point seems to be that when the men of St. Charles want to be at

their best, they can do it, as was shown in Louisville in July.

They then took on a song new to them, "Go Tell It On the Mountain", a song **David Wright** arranged for the *Gas House Gang* in 1999, which you'll find on one of the *GHG's* CDs. The song was a challenge, as several places have the leads singing words in notes in rapid succession, and they are not the melody. Jim Henry had them run through it a few times, to see that it was a mish-mash, then patiently took each section through each segment of the song until they could sing it correctly. This allowed me time to get it down, too, and by the end of the hour given to this segment, I could sing that song pretty well.

The next song was "Do You Hear What I Hear", one we've just picked up as a new song for our Christmas show, and one the *Ambassadors* sang while I was with them. Now I know why I was having problems with HOA on Tuesday. It's a different arrangement! I like the *Ambassadors* arrangement better, but I guess I'm prejudiced. I'll just have to re-learn it for our Unity Village show!

It was then breaktime, and the *Ambassadors* offer a 15-minute complete break just as Dallas does. Before we went to break, the guests were introduced, and I was introduced as a member of the newly crowned District champions, the *Heart of America Chorus*. They gave me a great ovation, which I know was as much for our chorus as it was for me. Then they all filed by to shake the hand of each guest, and most of them congratulated me once again as they went by.

After break, we took on a couple more of their older Christmas songs, both of which I remembered from 13 years ago, and was able to sing with them without music on both songs. It was then time for their Nigerian Christmas song "Betelehemu", and the fellows nearby told me to get ready to move! I removed the music from the guest book, set the book down, and braced myself for this song I've seen them do in previous years but had never tried to sing before. Needless to say, it was an experience! Interestingly, while it would seem to be entirely nonsense syllables, it was noted that none of these were diphthongs, and once you got into it, it seemed to flow pretty easily. When the chorus started swaying about with the African rhythms of the song, I was able to sway along, sort of like a reed in a storm-tossed sea. In the end, it was sort of fun, and I did manage to keep from being knocked over.

The *Ambassadors* rehearse until 10:30, and as in Dallas, the time just seem to fly by—we were done before I knew it. They wrapped up with their 50-50 drawing, which is like our Harmony Foundation drawing except that it is no big deal there. I wasn't even aware of it at the beginning of the evening. The winner gets only \$1 if he draws a blue marble, and the top prize is just \$50. In this aspect, HOA has them beat hands down!

Some suggested that since I showed myself able to make the run over one night, I could do it every week. They noted that one of their number regularly comes over from Toledo to sing with them every week. Well, it's tempting, but after I took some time to fellowship with a couple of friends and start back to Kansas City after midnight, to crawl into bed at 4 am, I don't think so. The thing that makes such visits so memorable is that it isn't something you do every week, or every month. I'll always have friends in the *Ambassadors of Harmony*, but my heart is now with the *Heart of America*. I've seen the *Ambassadors* rise to the top, yet they are still very similar to what I knew of them 13 years ago. All that shows is that the same thing can happen to HOA. It should be interesting to see where we go in the next few years.

To close, Jim Henry said something profound to the group after the break, a quotation from **Aristotle** that could easily apply to the *Heart of America Chorus* as District champions:

We are what we continually do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit.

Jim urged them to make it a habit of performing like champions, whether it be in warmups or in practice, doing contest songs or Christmas music, every time they are together, not just when they are on stage. It was a lesson we all can take to heart. ♥

# TIP OF THE HAT



1. HOA Music Team - **Jim Bagby, Carter Combs, Mike Neff, Keith Schweer, Grant Hunget and John Fortino** for guiding HOA to their 12th CSD contest win in Omaha, NE October 7-9, 2004.
2. **Mike Schumacher and Don Young** for their expert choreography guidance and to those over achievers in the HOA chorus who showed up for early choreography practice to hone their skills before contest.
3. **Al Higgins** for organizing the HOA Retreat at St. Benedicts in Atchison, KS.
4. To **Vince "What more can we say" Perry** for arranging contest registrations, and hotel accommodations for the 2004 CSD Contest in Omaha.
5. *Heartbeat* **Mary Fortino** for the work she did on the getting the chorus vests and ties in shape for the district contest in Omaha.
6. **Brooke Meyers** for the work he did securing handkerchiefs and ties for the district contest in Omaha. ♥

## SEPTEMBER 2004 BARBERSHOPPER OF THE MONTH



**Steve Carruthers (Vice-President for Chapter Development) receives his BOTM award from chapter president, Marty Oldehoeft**

**2004 Kansas City Missouri Chapter Music Team Honored for guiding HOA to the 2004 CSD district contest in Omaha, NE. Pictured (left to right): Jim Bagby, Carter Combs, Mike Neff, Keith Schweer, Grant Hunget and John Fortino**  
**NEXT STOP: SALT LAKE CITY!**



Photo courtesy of **Ron McIntire**