

## BARBERSHOPPER SPOTLIGHT: Bob Prosch

### Autobiography Of Bob Prosch



I was born and raised in Portage, Wisconsin, son of a salesman and an administrative secretary. I have one sibling, a brother, who is five years older, a fireman and EMT director in Nashville, Tennessee. I left home at 13 to attend Holy Name Seminary. We were at a temporary location in Milwaukee until Holy Name got built in 1964. We were the first class of Holy Name Seminary which has since closed but the buildings and ground are now the Bishop William P. O'Connor Pastoral Center and Center for all Madison diocesan offices and retirement apartments for priests. I attended five years and then transferred to the University of Wisconsin – Madison and graduated in 1971 with a bachelor

of arts degree in communication arts and a minor in philosophy.

Immediately thereafter I entered law school at William Mitchell School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota. I did not finish however. Next, I started in the insurance business selling life, health, property and casualty, and annuities which I still do but I've also done many other things along the way. I've sold everything from light bulbs, furniture, clothes, and automotive parts to mausoleum crypts. I was a district manager for the Essex International Automotive Aftermarket Division from 1972 to 1975.

Then I entered the insurance business starting with Prudential in 1976. In 1978 I started Bob's Arco Mini-mart on the interstate along Highway V in Deforest, Wisconsin. I operated that for two years until 1980. Then I went to work for Dewitt, Huggett, and Schumacher. A 60 man law firm in Madison. I worked directly for Attorney Robert Sundby as a paralegal codifying municipal ordinances until 1983.

In 1983, I started Northland Crematories in Portage. Unfortunately I ran into a brick wall with the funeral industry but continued my contracts with the DNR for highway deer removals that I had attained for my side business of an animal crematory. This continued until 1988. I also sold insurance part-time during all of these things up to the present time. In 1989 I went to work for the M & I Bank of Westfield until 1991. Then I

worked Brakebush brothers Company and Marquette Building Company until 1995 and since then I've worked for Figi's telemarketing, client focus connections and numerous insurance companies. Now I still telemarket for Figi's and broker insurance through Jack Schroeder and Associates out of Appleton, Wisconsin.

I'm an avid golfer and outdoors person who loves to sing, dance, and act and just "ham" around. I've had a lot of downsides in life like everyone else but overall it has made me appreciate life for what its worth and I've met just wonderful human beings along the way. I have raised three grown children who I am very proud of and who learned through the difficulties their dad endured. Even though I would not want to experience the bad again, I feel those things molded my children into becoming very self-sufficient wonderful and very understanding young people who are non-judgmental but very ambitious and accomplishing. I have felt the pinnacle of success in that regard.

My son, Ben, is 24 and just got married in June to a wonderful girl named Amy. They had a wonderful wedding and settled in Deforest in a home Ben acquired two years ago. Ben is a window specialist with Waunakee Construction in Madison and Amy runs a daycare in Cottage Grove with her mother. My daughter Beth is 28 and married to Sean who is a self taught graphic artist and movie maker. He is very talented as well as my daughter Beth who I believe could make it in a singing career if she was so inclined. Actually, Sean had a band in the past. Beth graduated from St. Olaf college and runs her own business in Mesa, Arizona where they live.

My other daughter, Megan, who has made me a proud grandpa three times, is married to Doug who is a self-employed carpenter who is also very talented, he can fix anything! They live in Pardeeville, Wisconsin. Megan has to be busy so she works full time at Tonscondora Plastics in Pardeeville. My

Grandchildren, Kaitlin (10), Jameson (5), and Olivia (4) are of course wonderful also, and are the same ages as mine were when as a single divorced father I had them until they got to college. Needless to say, they are the pride of my life. God has blessed me and allowed me to survive my 24 near misses in life to live and enjoy them all.

I, personally, have experienced many heartaches from divorce to business conflicts and failures to extreme emotional turmoil but have survived it all with a deep faith in God and the goodness of my fellow man. I love to make people happy and entertain and help them in any way I can. I've always had a good sense of humor which I attribute to my dad and the nuns that taught me in grade school. They seemed to tolerate it even when I was the only one laughing at my own jokes. Sometimes I thought life was a joke in itself but I always kept "singing" and tried to make others sing too, so finally I guess it is appropriate that I am with an organization that dedicates itself to making the whole world sing.

I want to thank each and everyone I've met here at the Great Northern Gateway Chorus because you have a fantastic organization and you are all very wonderful fellas. I look forward to winning more events and singing with you all for years to come.

## **Back to School for Valentine's Day**

by Joe Larson

Singing Valentines are a lot of fun to deliver, and many quartets make sure to arrange their schedules so they can be available on February 14th each year. As long as you're out there singing, if you have the time between Singing Valentine deliveries there is something else you could do on Valentine's Day: go back to school.

If you are a singer in the community it's a good bet you know the local high school choral music teacher, or you can find out who it is. School budget cuts often go for the arts first and the teachers are usually interested in ways to enrich their students' choral experience.

Regal Blend has been singing in the Wisconsin Rapids high schools for the past few Valentine's Days. It's a lot of fun for us, and it's a great way to meet young singers and introduce them to barbershop music. Here's how you can get started doing this in your area.

Call your local music teacher and introduce yourself. Tell them you will be in town on the 14th delivering singing valentines, and politely ask if they might like your quartet to stop in and sing for their choral music students. Be sure to point out that this would be of no cost to them.

If the teacher is not familiar with you or with barbershop singing, describe your quartet's history and qualifications. Point them to your web page, if you have one, so they can see your pictures and hear what you sound like.

If they say "No," thank them for their time and ask if they know of any other choral music teacher who might be interested in a visit from a barbershop quartet. Or perhaps a different time of year might work better for them.

It goes without saying that you should be good at barbershop singing or you shouldn't do this. You want to impress the students and teachers with chords that ring, not demonstrate your singing problems. However, the students will give you a heck of a lot more slack than the judging panel at any contest.

Work around their schedule. The class times are not flexible. Check with the teachers about mid-January so you know

when to schedule your visits. Find out what they would like you to do: A mini-concert? A singing workshop? A review of the theory of vocal music production? Be flexible and honest about what you would be able to do. The high school classes we have visited with were not looking for music theory: they were looking to learn more about barbershop singing. The teachers often have a few topics they would like you to reinforce, like the issues involved in singing together, listening to each other, etc. Ask the teacher what they would like you to talk about, what are their hot buttons, and what student age groups you will be visiting with.

Here's a sample program for a twenty minute visit with a class. You will need to adjust this to fit your own quartet's style and the needs of the class you are visiting.

Of course, if you enter a public school of any kind you need to go directly to the office and check in. They will usually send someone along to help you find the music class.

After the teacher introduces you, sing a song. Keep all your songs fun and upbeat. If you have time for several songs, you could do a ballad as well.

Introduce your quartet and briefly tell them about your part and what you do for a living. As in, "Hi, I'm Joe Larson and I sing the Lead part, which usually carries the melody in a barbershop song. I work for the CIA as a Secret Agent and just flew in this morning from Paris."

Sing another song.

Talk up barbershop singing and your local chapter's meeting time and location. Tell them where they can hear more barbershop singing. Are any local shows coming up? Mention the Sweet Adeline program for the girls.

Teach the class a simple tag, like the "Mickey Mouse" tag or "Sleepytime Down South." Hey, this is a singing class after all. They can sing, and they will if you tell them they are going to. If the class is the usual SATB mix of girls and boys, tell the Sopranos they are now Tenors, the Altos are Leads, Tenors are Baritones, and Basses are, well, Basses. Your quartet can be the teaching quartet for the tag, helping each section with their parts. After they learn the tag get a "volunteer" student quartet to sing it alone or with your quartet.

Ask them if they have any questions for you. They usually do. The most common question we've heard is "How often do you practice?"

You can ask the students questions too. Not as a quiz. Once I asked them to suggest recent songs that they thought might fit the barbershop style.

If there's time, sing one more song for them. Let them know who they can contact if they want to learn more about barbershop singing, and leave contact information with the teacher.

Go back to the school office and check out. They usually don't mind if you want to sing them a song, too.

The real lessons you are teaching include the following, even if you never say a word about any of them:

- Grownups sing for fun even after they leave school. This is important for the school administrators to know, and also for the students who are only taking Chorus because they have to.
- Barbershop singing is fun to do.
- Singing theory. In a short visit like this the theory is probably the least important of your topics. But if you are a good singing quartet then you can't help but demonstrate some music theory in practice.

You should consider going back to school

some time. It can be a lot of fun and it's a good thing to do for the future of our great hobby. Let me know if you have any questions about visiting with classes, or would like to share your class experiences.

Joe Larson  
3/19/2007



## Mergers and Acquisitions

by Norm Barnard  
Stevens Point Chapter



It sounds like something you should be reading in the Wall Street Journal.

But actually, it has to do with the joint effort of the Heart of Harmony Chorus and the Northern Gateway Chorus. While our first meeting as a single unit seemed like so much talk for a while, it finally happened on March 17, 2007. It was a great day for the Irish and both of our chapters.

My March 17<sup>th</sup> began with a missed morning alarm, which in turn led to a missed breakfast with Robb Thiel and company at 7:00 a.m. in Fond du Lac. Oh

well, the highlight of my day was not to be breakfast with friends, but was the scheduled joint rehearsal and coaching session.

Mergers and acquisitions. Let's look at those two terms for a moment. We can all understand the merger portion, but what about acquisitions? I feel that we acquire better skills, better sound and new family. I think that George Gipp said it at some point during that Saturday when he spoke about what this effort is *not*. In the eyes of some of our Society brethren, it may be viewed as strictly an effort to form that great northern union (pun intended) for the purpose of winning a contest. It seems that many of our brothers in harmony might want to view such an effort from that perspective, but I think of it as a chance to grow. A chance to learn. A chance to produce a better quality sound, which in turn will lead to the preservation of our style of music.

Oh my, there's that preservation word that was stricken from our name several years ago. (There, I said and I'm glad!)

Let's get back to all that growing, learning, quality of sound stuff. I saw and heard plenty of learning going on during that March 17 session. As to the growing aspect of it all, I certainly grew a smidge. After 40 plus years of practicing this style of harmony, yes I too, grew. The growing and quality of sound seem to go hand in hand. Think about it. As the quality of sound improves, we grow as a unit as well as an individual. With growth, be it in numbers or in lessons learned, the quality of sound improves. Just don't be misled by the safety in numbers theory. You still have to make sure that your quality of sound is individually upheld. It was upheld to a very high degree during that March 17<sup>th</sup> session.

During our March 17<sup>th</sup> rehearsal, I had a chance to witness some individual growth happening right there in front of me. I'll cite a gentleman by the name of Dennis as my

example. Denny Fermech was there as a new member of the West Allis Chapter. He told me of a one year stint with the Milwaukee Chapter about five or six years ago. Now he is back with his son Justin and from what I observed, Denny is hooked. There's no hope for this poor guy. He's ours. Another brother in song. He was about as happy as a kid at Christmas and virtually soaking up information as fast as it was fed to him.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not mention the quality of the information given to us that day. It was truly amazing to see Don Clause work. Work? That was more like play, wasn't it? Well, it was play for the most part. Along about 2:30 that afternoon, however, I flat-lined. I was physically beat and I remember someone up there talking. Whether it was George or Don or somebody, they would give instruction and I immediately thought "What did he just say?". Nothing more would sink in. I was fast becoming pretty dysfunctional as a singer/performer person. I do, however, remember that I remained on my feet for the entire session, save perhaps a minute somewhere along the line. I even ate lunch standing up. Pretty dumb, huh?

Don Clause is truly one of those rare individuals who knows what he knows and is willing to share it. His Q&A after the session was finished confirmed that when he said that his skills are merely a gift and he uses that gift to improve the abilities of a group or individual. If it hasn't happened yet, someone should be delegated to send a letter of thanks to Don expressing the gratitude of both of our organizations.

I'll close with a hearty "thank you" to all of you who were willing to give up that Saturday for the good of the 'chapter'. Be proud to have been a part of it and be thankful that you had the chance to experience it.

## Who Woulda Thought?

By Dan Schobert

"Who woulda thought?" There I was, with a bunch of other guys, standing on risers, dressed in black tuxs, singing our hearts out and people were standing, cheering even. My heart swelled in the midst of it all. Who would have thought that an average joe, like me, could find himself at such a place at such a time. But it happened to me and has happened to thousands of men across the globe because that is what barbershopping does for a guy. It makes it possible to take a rough hewn guy off the street, maybe with little or no music education and, through a lot of diligence and training, put him in front of hundreds who actually pay money to hear him and his buddies belt out some old tunes. It is an amazing, this barbershop thing.! Who woulda thought that with some effort and determination, men from all walks of life could shed their work-a-day clothes and responsibilities and have fun singing with other men from diverse backgrounds. That is what barbershopping gives and continues to give to those willing to step up to the plate for a dish of enjoyment. Sure, I found out, it takes work and commitment to make it happen. But worth it? You betcha.!

Yep, I knew there were other things I could do... be on a bowling team, play softball, go hiking...but barbershopping gave me something more... an opportunity to expand, to grow, to learn and in the learning, become a better person. There is more, I learned, to barbershop than singing... it is an environment where friendship are made and nurtured, where skills can be developed and honed...all in the name of fun. Nothing like it.

Who woulda thought?

## How to Be a Great Bass

Some bass singing tips from champ **Bill Meyers**.

### How to sing bass

*submitted by Bill Myers, bass of Revival, 1998 International Champions*

The bass singer delivers the essence and character of the barbershop sound. I just love to sing along with recordings featuring good, quality bass singers and from there develop my own style of singing bass. It's fun and you learn a lot from the experts. You learn how to sing intervals with ease and accuracy, how to balance chords and how to sing with quality all up and down the scale. Why wouldn't any bass singer want to sing along every day with the best we have? It's difficult to pin down just three of my favorite barbershop bass singers, but here's a start. These three are also genuinely nice guys and fun Barbershoppers to be around. What a wonderful combination!

**Jim Henry** - Here's a guy who puts more of his personality in the music he creates than any other barbershop bass I know. I respect his commitment to a quality sound all up and down the scale. Jim gives enough of his ego away to complement his quartet with just enough sound to blend and match to perfection. Yet his dominant bass color is always evident when The Gas House Gang (1993 champion) sings. I sing bass with him by tape every day.

**Don Barnick** - Really not a bass singer, by his own admission, but probably the very best at making the vocal apparatus work for the job; he was a gold medal tenor with Grandma's Boys in 1979. However, using all of his resonators, Don was able to command the rich, quality, up-front ping in the bass sound all up and down the scale with the 1992 international champion Keepsake. You will not find a finer example of one using what the good Lord gave him to work in his favor. I sing bass with him by tape every day.

**Rick Staab** - One of the all-time greats. Here's a guy who was born with a golden bass voice. He'll be the first to tell you, "It was a gift from above." I think he sang a bad note once in 1977. Not sure which note it was, but at least one. Always, always, with quality and richness, always resonant, always accurate. Just the kind of bass singer most leads pray for. His voice was made to order for the legendary 1978 champion Bluegrass Student Union. Ah, I remember them well! I sing bass with him by tape every day.

**Bill's ten tips for better bass singing:**

- Sing every note with a quality sound
- Sing with full face vowels
- Sing every day
- Vertical "Ahh" on the inside of every vowel
- Every five seconds, energize
- Get a coach
- Step into the picture the lyric creates
- Sing on top of the air
- Resonant, warm spin in the sound
- Always be working on a new song



**CHAPTER MISSION STATEMENT**

The Stevens Point Chapter shall dedicate itself to striving for performance excellence, by continually improving the vocal and visual quality of its musical presentations.

The chapter shall strive to attract the kind of new members who will contribute energy, talent, and a strong desire for excellence.

The chapter leadership, reflecting the interests of the membership, shall commit itself to maintaining an effective organization that ensures opportunities for improved singing, for quartet participation, and for promoting the Barbershop music style.

**CHAPTER VISION**

TO CONTINUE TO BE A HIGHLY-RESPECTED MALE VOCAL ORGANIZATION, DEDICATED TO:

- Maintaining the Barbershop Tradition
- Pursuing vocal improvement
- Seeking opportunities for community involvement
- Recruiting new members, and retaining current members
- Promoting personal development
- Entertaining our audiences
- Preserving the joy of Barbershop singing



## PLAN FOR FUTURE EVENTS

Fall Convention -  
Rochester, MN May  
4-6(Fri-Sun)  
International **Pre-  
lims** - Manitoba,  
Canada.

May 19(Sat)  
**Packerland Div**  
One Contest - Fond  
du Lac, WI

Jun 29-Jul 1(Fri,  
5pm, Sat-Sun noon-  
close) Riverfront  
Rendezvous -  
Pfiffner Park



Jul 1-8(Sat-Sat,Sun) **International**  
Convention - Denver, CO.

Jul 16 (Mon, ? pm) **Waupaca** singout

Aug (Sun, 1pm?) Fun 'n Games &  
Food too **Picnic**

Oct 6 (Sat, 3pm/7:30pm) **Harvest of**  
**Harmony** - Stevens Point

Oct 26-28(Fri-Sun) **LO'L District**

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