

BARBERSHOP POINTERS

Stevens Point, Wisconsin chapter of Barbershop Harmony Society, Inc.

Meeting every Monday 7:30 P.M.

Harmony House – 3500 Harmony Lane

P.O. Box 482 – 715-344-9052

Packerland Division – Land O Lakes District

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What are you doing on your summer vacation?



By Joe Larson

Stevens Point chorus member Bill Jenkins is a teacher at Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH), and he has some interesting plans for his summer vacation. He is going to bicycle across the USA with two friends. I asked him a few questions about his trip, starting with:



BILL JENKINS

You're doing what?!

Here's the plan. I am planning on cycling across the U.S. with Dr. Dave Henneghan, orthopedic surgeon, and his son Pat. The three of us have been planning this since the summer of 2006. This past February things got serious when I started cycling daily on my stationary bike for 1-2 hours. As soon as the weather improved in March I was out cycling, trying to improve my endurance. Today I am able to comfortably cycle 40-50 miles daily with no ill effect; at my age (I turned 60 on May 2) the only problem I have experienced is lack of energy after a hard day. I hope that with school ending in 2 weeks and the stress of preparing for my classes at

SPASH disappearing I will be able to focus my energy toward the ride. I also have noticed that I am very sick of riding on the same roads in central Wisconsin; I am hoping that the change of scenery across our beautiful U.S. will reinvigorate me.

Where do you ride around here to train?

I have routes to Polonia, Rosholt and Amherst to the east, and Rudolph and Rapids to the west. I also rode from Wausau to Point last weekend via Mosinee and Junction City.

What is the schedule for this trip?

Our plan is to fly to Seattle on June 7 (day after school is out). We will ship our bikes out a week ahead via UPS. An old Navy buddy of mine will host us as we make final preps for the ride. We hope to hit the road by June 12. The route is Highway 20, the northern-most route across the state through the Cascade Mountains. We then pass into the panhandle of Idaho and into Montana, where we hope to cross Glacier National Park on the Going-to-the-Sun Highway over Logan Pass, the highest point on our trip (6646 feet). After that it's "all down hill", through northern Montana, part of Canada, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. We hope to pass through Stevens Point in early-mid July. After that we will cycle to Manitowoc and catch the Lake Michigan ferry to Michigan, then through Ontario, then cross into New York at Niagara, then across northern NY and New England. With luck we will end up at Bar Harbor, Maine by the end of July. The hope is to cover this 4500 mile trip at a pace of about 75 miles a day.

What kind of bicycles and equipment are you planning to use?

Pat and I will be riding Trek 520 touring bikes, and Dave will be riding a

custom-built recumbent. We will be riding unsupported, carrying all of the necessary camping, cooking, and survival gear. Dave and Pat will have trailers behind their bikes but I will not. I will have panniers on both front and back wheels to carry everything I need. It will be like backpacking in the wilderness, except done on a bike instead of on my back. We will carry the necessary spare parts and equipment necessary for emergency road repairs; for example, we will have two spare tubes and a spare tire. I plan to pack an extra set of long underwear for the mountains, but that will likely not be needed once we get out of the mountains. We expect to camp along the way to minimize expense; we have two two-man tents. But occasionally we will hit the motels to get a hot shower. I have made some contacts with fellow U.S. Naval Academy alumni along the way to support us.

How will you handle finances?

Bad weather?

I'll take cash and a card. All three of us have cell phones which we'll only use sparingly to conserve battery power and also since phone coverage where we are going is poor. We will cycle in just about any weather; I am used to rain, all I do is throw a rain jacket on as I ride. I have Primal cycling shorts and will also pack a pair of long riding pants because of the cold in the mountains. My cycling jacket is phosphorescent yellow, very visible. The important part of riding attire are the shoes which clip into the pedals for better power development. All gear is polypropylene/nylon -- it's light weight, wicks sweat away from the body, and dries quickly after rain.

Why are you doing this?

Why? I guess for the Henneghans it's a matter of a last real father-son experience before Pat moves on into college and starts his own life. For

me, it's always been a dream of mine to ride a bike across the U.S. I kind of injected myself into the equation, and the Henneghans were gracious enough to allow me to come along. My wife Teri and family have been very supportive of my doing this; they realize that I will never have another chance like this for such a major undertaking.

This is quite a trip. I imagine you have some concerns.

Concerns? Yes! How will I do? Will I be able to make it over the Cascades and Rockies? Will I make it across the U.S., or give up? How will things (finances, yard work, etc) work out at home with me gone for two months? What about road hazards? What redneck, pickup jerk will try to run me off the road in upstate Idaho or Montana? Yes, I have concerns, but all I can do now is focus on the task at hand and hope that there are enough good people in this country to help us out when needed. I will be taking a digital video camera with me to chart our progress; perhaps I will return with a great story or two to tell. We are hoping to set up a website, and we are also involved with the Lance Armstrong Livestrong Foundation. So we hope to have additional details available before we leave.

Well, on behalf of the chorus, best of luck to you and the Hennegehns. Let us know how it's going if you get a chance. I'm sure you will have some good stories to tell in August.

(May 25, 2008)



DID YOU KNOW?

The lowest note on a standard piano vibrates with a frequency of 27.5 Hz. Interestingly, this is about the same rate of motion that constitutes an important threshold in visual perception. A sequence of still photographs or slides displayed at about this rate of presentation will give the illusion of motion.

From This Is Your Brain On Music by Daniel J. Levitin

Observations from the cheap seats...



By Robb Thiel

For the first time since 1993, I did not participate in the Packerland Division Contest. Let me tell you, it was a strange feeling. Getting there early, dressing in our tuxedos, commiserating with the guys, then going through an extensive warm-up prior to hitting the stage. For the past 15 years those activities had become a staple of my life. When I made the decision to not compete with the chorus this year, I knew I'd have mixed feelings. However, I took it as an opportunity to attend the contest

as nothing more than a spectator. That experience gave me an interesting perspective on our wonderful hobby.

My initial reaction to the competition? Disappointment. Now, that may be a little harsh, but hear me out...

From the moment the curtain opened and the first chorus took the stage, until it finally closed after the last quartet, I realized there was one thing missing in this competition - Passion! Don't get me wrong, there was some fine singing by some of the choruses and quartets, I just felt the performances lacked enthusiasm and, more importantly, heart-felt singing.

Guys, this hobby of ours is a complicated one. The intricate harmonies alone are enough to put the average singer over the edge. Then you mix in some strange rhythms, chord-balancing, and other key aspects of barbershop singing, it doesn't leave much room for error. Here's the kicker, though - you can execute everything I just mentioned flawlessly, but if you are not singing with energy or with a purpose, none of the technical "perfection" means anything.

A perfect example of this was the mic-testing quartet, International-qualifier Main Street Station. They sang their set technically well. Everything was sung in tune, pickups were executed well, and the quartet was very well synched. However, in this writer's humble opinion, they simply sang their songs. As an audience member, I didn't feel they connected with the music they were singing, and as such, they didn't connect with their audience. Very few quartets or choruses are good enough to just sing - to become truly great you have to put your heart and soul into every single performance.

When listening to music, I can let a lot of things slide. Everyone is going to flat a note, miss a pickup, or blow through a rest - I mean, c'mon, none of us is perfect. However, one thing I cannot let slide is passionless singing. Unfortunately, this theme of "just singing" was prevalent throughout the competition, and it left this spectator bored.

I'd recommend everyone get on the internet, go to youtube.com and do a search for Vocal Majority or Westminster Chorus, and watch how true barbershop artisans perform. You will not find a single guy who isn't "feeling" the music. Because of that, they so easily pass their emotions onto the audiences, leaving everyone feeling fulfilled.

Putting your heart into a song is something everyone can do, regardless of skill level. Leave everything you have on stage - you can't take it with you! And, in the end, your audiences will appreciate the performance more, as will you.

Editorial Thoughts

Some of you may have wondered where the May issue of Barbershop Pointers went. There wasn't one. I was in the beginning planning stages of that issue when Karen Leahy left us. Because Peter is the main man responsible for getting each issue printed and mailed, I chose to give him a break because he would certainly have enough to deal with without getting another issue out. Oh, I probably could have made it happen. After discussing it with Peter, it sounded as though he might have welcomed something to do, as we could all surmise with his participation in events so close on the heels of losing his wife. Be that as it may, I still chose to let him rest.

Let's turn our attention, if you will, to the recent Division contest held in Appleton on May 17. I know I'm pretty excited about what transpired. While our score may have been bumped down a bit, I thought we did pretty well under the circumstances. A lot of credit goes to all of you who participated. While we qualified for District, I was a little dismayed by a comment of one of the judges, perhaps all of the judges that we met with during evaluations. There was an underlying theme regarding just about everything we had learned the previous summer under the tutelage of Don Clause. I could help but think; why didn't these guys remember any of what they had learned? I can't answer that. Only you can do that.

Putting that aside, I think we might just have amazed our competitors, given our current set of circumstances. We can thank our new director, Kevin Morrissey, for assistance in that regard. While we heard about having made the poor man work way too hard to get us to that point, I think that we are on the right track. The rehearsal on the next Monday after that contest gave me some insight as to what we can be capable of under his direction. I like his teaching method. A lot of good stuff was given to us that night. What I don't care for is the apparent lack of courtesy on behalf of a lot of us while he is attempting to teach. Many seem to want to get in a snide comment or say something in jest which only leads to yet another of us to keep the spark alive. Sort of a 'oneupmanship' thing. "Oh, you thought that was funny? Let me expand upon it."

I think you get the idea. If you don't have something constructive to add, don't say anything. Let's give the man the respect he deserves. After all, he knows more than we do about it, so why not pay attention and become better for it. Another distraction can be several of us trying to sing those two

or three measures that you just failed to get right. All while the director is attempting to take care of another matter. Do you have any idea how distracting that is? If you have a trouble spot, circle it and learn it later. Now that my scolding session is over, I see us doing great things under Kevin's leadership. Pay attention to his vocal technique sessions. They impressed me because I can see all of us improving our vocal quality just by paying attention to those little hints he gave us on May 19. Keep it up Kevin. Don't let us wear you down by our refusal to submit. Wow, refusal to submit sounds pretty harsh, but I don't know of another way to describe it. Why would your own personal vocal quality remain somewhat ho-hum if you didn't choose to let it stay that way?

So, once again, I hear good things happening. If we all pay attention and apply ourselves, we can reach that next level.

Yours In Harmony, Norm

PHOTOS FROM APPLETON





PLAN FOR FUTURE EVENTS

June 26, (Thursday) Board Meeting – Harmony House

Jul 2- 8, (Wed-Tue) International Convention - Nashville, TN

Jul 4th, 5th, 6th Riverfront Rendezvous (be sure to sign up for pizza sales)

Jul 21, (Mon) Performance-Crystal River Home, Waupaca (6 p.m.) followed by a performance & social gathering at Clearwater Resort (7 p.m.)

Aug 3, (Sun) Summer Church Singout – Followed by Chapter Picnic

Oct 4th, (Sat) Harvest of Harmony - Stevens Point

Oct 24-26, (Fri-Sun) L'OL Fall Contest - Appleton, WI

Dec 13, Christmas Party – Spiedini's

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