

## Welcome a-Board

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, the Silver Statesmen and their significant others came together at Three Square Food Bank headquarters to install the 2015 slate of officers, honor several members for their contributions to the chorus during the past year, and to share a good meal with friends. Kudos to **Steve Salmon** on the selection of Three Square Food Bank for the occasion. Good food, and great outreach to the community.

This was an opportunity to recognize those who exemplify the “Can Do” spirit of the Silver Statesmen, to pay tribute to a member with the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to **John Mininger**, and to even poke a little fun at ourselves through former City of Lights member **John Kinde’s** “Carnac the Great” routine.

Interestingly, the honorees were all from the Bass section:

Barbershopper of the Year (“BOTY”) recipient: **Martin Judd**

President’s Award recipient: **Fred Green**

Director’s Award recipient: **Dick Morrison**

Rookie of the Year: **Larry Paterson**

### The 2015 Board of Directors:

President - **Albert Weiss**

Executive Vice President - **Greg Dreyer**

Immediate Past President - **Steve Salmon**

Secretary - **Ivan Lambert**

Treasurer - **Wes White**

Vice President - Music - **Larry Halvorson**

Vice President - Membership - **Joseph Payton**

Vice President - Public Relations - **Martin Judd**

Member at Large - **Bill Lusk**

Member at Large - **John Lenox**

*...see next page for photos from the awards banquet*



### Board of Directors - 2015

(lft-rt) **Greg Dreyer**-Executive Vice President, **Wes White** –Treasurer, **Ivan Lambert**-Secretary, **Albert Weiss**-President, **Bill Lusk**-Member at Large, **Larry Halvorson**-VP, Music, **John Lenox**-Member at Large, **Martin Judd**-VP, Marketing & PR, **Joe Payton**-VP, Membership, **Steve Salmon**-Immediate Past President.

Martin Judd (rt) - BOTY 2014



John Mininger - Lifetime Achievement Award 2014



Dick Morrison (rt) - Director's Award 2014



Larry Paterson (lft) - Rookie of the Year 2014



Fred Green (lft) - President's Award 2014



Pickup Quartet - Bud Adler, Greg Dreyer, Ivan Lambert & Albert Weiss



John Kinde - Carnac the Great

## From the Director's Corner



**Jim Halvorson**  
Director

### Character and Excellence

What an exciting time to be a member of the Silver Statesmen. In April, we will perform in an unprecedented concert performance that will have the arts community talking and set a path for growth and encouragement like we've never seen. In May, we will participate in our third division contest, with every intention of continuing our upward trajectory, solidifying why we earned "Chapter of the Year" in 2014 from the Far Western District! And in June, we will debut a new show format that will become a highlight of the concert year, providing a unique and open venue to showcase quartets and chorus in a unique atmosphere. These are truly exciting times for the Silver Statesmen.

We have learned more new repertoire, expanding our horizons and building a solid musical and vocal foundation that will pay us dividends for years to come. Our pace of learning has increased, not only with learning materials, but with the enthusiasm of members eagerly taking to new music quickly. You all see the benefit of getting off the paper so the music can live. As your director, I love this pace for it challenges me to work to bring you more new and exciting concepts each week. It is a thrilling time for our chapter.

All these successes do come with some challenges. Our biggest challenge right now is our attendance. We have a membership of 80+ members, yet we only have 45-55 currently in attendance each week. In addition, of the 45-55 that meet each week, approx. 35-40 of those members are there consistently from week to week. This means that if we had every member available, we should be fielding a chorus of 65-70 members each week. Can you imagine how exciting that sound would be? What would that kind of camaraderie feel like? How much joy we would get out of sharing our music with that many friends each week? Just think of the possibilities!

For me, this boils down to character. Now, I'm an old fuddy-duddy about this stuff because I have been in barbershop a long time. Barbershop has directly influenced the life, family, and successes that I have had this far. I'm here not because of a paycheck; I'm here each week because I owe it to those before me to uphold their character and carry on the traditions they instilled in me. More importantly, we have a job, as members of S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., to promote and propagate our hobby and art form by presenting the biggest and best chorus to the community we can.

To paraphrase a quote I once read, "You build your reputation on your actions while you are a part of something. You build your legacy by how you are remembered when you are no longer around." How can we ensure that we build on the reputation of the chorus to each other, our community and our district? Right now it comes through showing the strength in attendance and membership. The musical plans and the pace of learning are already there. We are growing each week, but we need every member possible each week to keep achieving the lofty goals we set forth as a chorus. What a great predicament to be in.

As always, I am humbled and honored to stand in front of all of you each week and learn from such a wonderful group of friends and teachers. I hope that I can start seeing more of you in the coming weeks.



Are you going to Pittsburgh in July?  
Register now for the "Good Seats!"  
Raise your spirits and experience  
the magic of the annual BHS  
International Convention &  
Competition!!

**WARNING! - EXTREME SINGING BEING CONDUCTED**

Under the auspices of a grant from the Nevada Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, we encourage you to be a part of this groundbreaking event!!

For the FIRST TIME EVER, the three largest men's choruses in Las Vegas will be performing together on Saturday, April 25th. Mark your calendars and tell everyone you know. This is a FREE concert and family-friendly. These groups will "blow your socks off" and wait until you hear all three together on stage at the same time..... Guaranteed tears in the eyes and goosebumps!! Don't miss this great concert!!

**The Silver Statesmen, UNLV Varsity Men's Glee Club  
& The Las Vegas Men's Chorus**

Present

**"Men, Men and Men!"**



**SATURDAY, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 p.m.**



**Green Valley Presbyterian Church**

**1798 Wigwam Parkway, Henderson, NV 89074**

**There is NO charge for admission – a freewill offering will be taken  
For more information contact any of the three groups or check out**

**[www.silverstatesmen.com](http://www.silverstatesmen.com) or [www.greenvalleypres.com](http://www.greenvalleypres.com)**

This program has been funded, in part, by the Nevada Arts Council, a state agency and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

&

the Barbershop Harmony Society Foundation



## The Silver Statesmen "Lineup"

### DIRECTOR

Jim Halvorson

### TENORS (11)

Buehrer, Roger  
Conner, Mike  
Halvorson, Dallas  
Mininger, John  
Nelson, James  
Pierce, Xavier  
Preston, Randy  
Salmon, Collin  
Spinks, Philip  
Truman, Carl  
Weiss, Albert

### LEAD (25)

Andersen, Roger  
Coon, Rich  
Cuevas, Gil  
Halvorson, James  
Halvorson, Larry  
Hettinga, Warren  
Hurwitz, Mike  
Ives, Rick  
Jewell, Skyler  
Klaus, Bill  
Knapp, Greg  
Lambert, Ivan  
Larson, Dave  
Lenox, John  
Litchfield, Larry  
Melcher, Carl  
Onufrieff, Victor  
Payton, Joe  
Pratt, Keith  
Pruszka, Dave  
Pucci, Roc  
Rovere, Rob  
Salmon, Steve  
Sonneman, Phil  
Swart, Jeff

- as of 1 April 2015

### BARITONE (17)

Ackers, Stan  
Adler, Bud  
Avila, Peter  
Cotton, Ed  
Floyd, Dave  
Harrold, Kurtis  
Hunt, Dean  
Kleckner, Marc  
Krausman, Ernie  
Pascucci, Joe  
Raybeck, Jerry  
Salmon, Isaac  
Salz, Don  
Sellnow, Brian  
Sexton, Derek  
Straub, Walter  
Wisniewski, Ryan

### BASS (33)

Amblad, Bob  
Bossard, Buzz  
Bye, Jerry  
Cano, Abiel  
Cimino, Charlie  
Cooper, Kyle  
Craig, Herb  
Dreyer, Greg  
Feeney, Peter  
Fewell, Scott  
Goldberg, Fred  
Green, Fred  
Hill, Billy  
Hulbert, John  
Johnson, Dennis  
Johnson, James  
Judd, Martin  
Kennedy, Dave  
Lusk, Bill  
Massa, JD  
McDonnell, Walter  
McNabb, Brandon  
Mondi, Nino  
Morrison, Dick  
Paterson, Larry  
Pechart, Larry  
Puckett, Antwun  
Scharren, Steve  
Silla, Joseph  
Sullivan, Sully  
White, Wes  
Wines, Chuck  
Wyson, Joe

## Newest Chapter Members

**Peter Avila - Bari**

**Carl Melcher - Lead**



## COME JOIN US

If you have recently moved to Las Vegas, are just visiting, or have lived here all your life, we want you to feel welcome at any of our meetings.

**WHERE:** Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, 8425 W. Windmill Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89113.

**WHEN:** Thursday evenings from 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

**WHY:** Because if you are between 10 - 110 years old, like to sing, and can carry a tune in a bucket (singing in the shower and the car is encouraged!) we'd love to have you come and enjoy the evening with us.

**Visitors are always welcome!**

## Our Mission Statement

*The Silver Statesmen is a men's a cappella chorus hailing from Las Vegas, Nevada. We specialize in the American musical art form of Barbershop Harmony. Our mission is to share our passion for music with our community and enrich the lives of our audiences and members. By striving for growth in our musical endeavors and our community outreach, we are constantly on a path of progress. What makes all this possible? .... It's the music!*

## President's Corner

By Albert Weiss



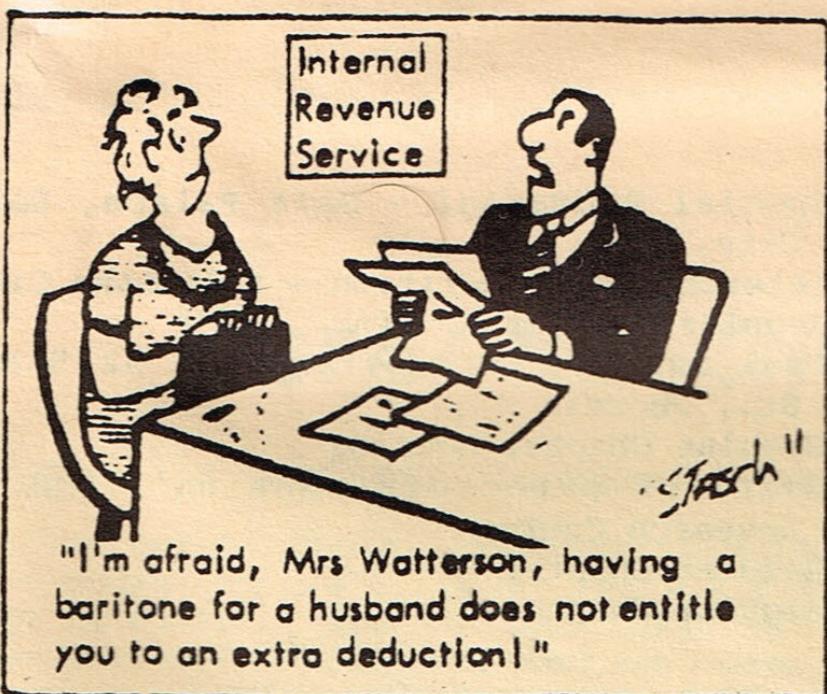
**Albert Weiss**  
Chapter President

I find it ironic that the first two people to serve as president on this venture of ours were both former directors of one (or more!) of our predecessor choruses. I do not know to what extent that was by design or by accident. It may take some time to figure that one out.

Something that opened the eyes of both your Immediate Past President and your current President was/is the importance of Financial Responsibility. This was recognized during the general meeting Steve and the Board held last year that attempted to identify who we are and what is important to us. It is one of our Five Pillars.

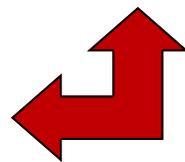
It takes funds to operate our chapter, and we have come to the realization that raising the necessary revenue must be done in other ways than performances. This is especially true at our current stage of development as a performing group. Your leadership bodies, both the Board and the Music Team, are exploring "outside the box" for fund raising activities. We are looking for things that we can do together that will provide us with opportunities for fellowship and to raise revenue. Please share any ideas you may have with your members-at-large so that we may consider them.

It is exciting to me that we are already performing at a much higher level than either of our predecessor groups. I hope you see on the horizon, as I do, the day when we will be performing well enough to get the big gigs the (Las Vegas) convention market has to offer. This is a very attainable goal. In the meantime, we must do all we can to find revenue opportunities outside of our usual comfort zone.



There are almost as many jokes about Barbershop Baritones as there are about drummers in a rock band.

Contributed by *JD Massa*



## A Silver Nugget Moment

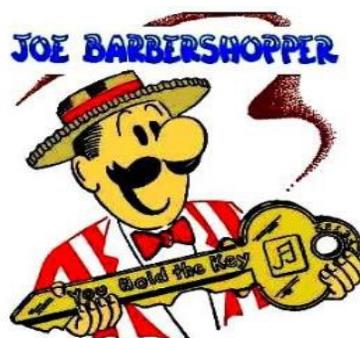
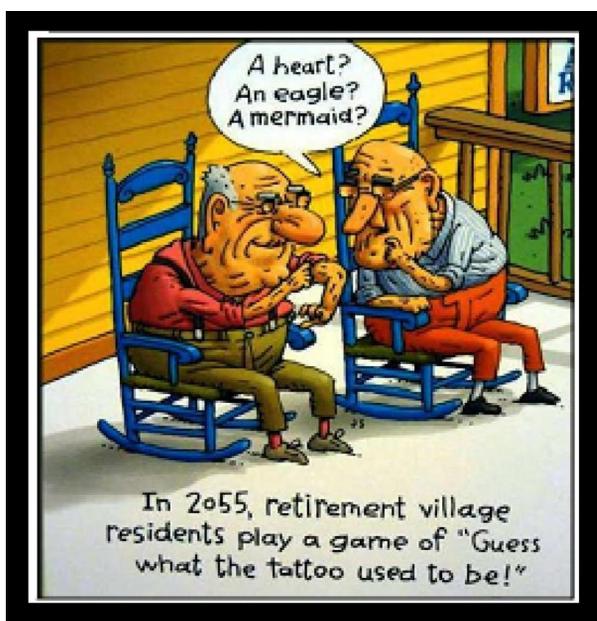
by Flip Sonneman

We have come a long way as a chorus. You see Jim's reaction when we ring the dickens out of a chord, and you stifle that inner voice that wants to scream out "Wow!". I miss that sensation of goose bumps or the tingle of my arm or neck hair when we ring a chord. I do sense it, on rare occasion, but without that physical effect. It's more Jim's and/or the chorus' reaction that tells me we have done good.

But silver nugget moments are not limited to being on the risers. Last November, I was at a surgical center with my wife, sitting next to a woman who seemed pleasant enough and we started to talk, whiling away the time until she was called for her procedure. I had just seen Julian Neel's prize-winning rendition of "Hooked On A Feeling" and thought she might like it. She was old enough to remember Blue Swede's version and was impressed by what she heard, so I told her about our Christmas show, gave her our website information, etc.

Fast forward until after the 2<sup>nd</sup> show, and I'm helping break down the risers. The lady and two friends come down to the stage, and they were ecstatic about the performance, saying we were so much better than other shows they had seen. P.S - this was their introduction to barbershop. The lady gave me her contact information and has asked that I let her know about future shows.

Silver nuggets come in many sizes and shapes.



COME  
SING  
WITH  
US!

**Singing daily for at least ten minutes reduces stress, clears sinuses, improves posture and can even help you live longer.**



Larry Halvorson  
VP, Music

## **Our Chorus..... Where We've Been..... and Where We're Going!**

At the last music team's full meeting, I asked the team to evaluate how we have done so far this year. Below are comments about our successes and a few areas where we have concerns.

### **The pluses:**

- We have a great director
- We are satisfied with our progress
- We like the flow of the evening
- We like the music selections
- New learning tools are great
- Improving vocal production
- Breaking old habits

### **The minuses:**

- Members are learning but at a slower pace
- Lack of a team spirit
- Uniforms
- Choreo concerns
- Financial concerns
- Attendance regularity
- Fear of talking about expectations
- Lack of coaching

These comments are a very generic snap shot of the discussions. We spent some time talking about each item. I would ask that each member look at the pluses and minuses and see where you agree.

I feel we are making good strides but do feel that most of us can do more to learn quicker and take more personal responsibility. We continue to hold fast on our model of no auditions and we have no plans to alter that path. We are not asking that any member qualify with sections leaders, so our core has not changed since we started.

What is obvious is that we are getting better and as we do, many of the members strive for more. We want to continue to follow our mission statement and stay on a path to progress. The music team is addressing the areas where we have concerns and will continue to evaluate our progress to ensure that we are giving you the best opportunity for success.

We are averaging about 50 men a night and have nearly 65 active singers. If you break that down, we are at about 77% each night. Our core is around 40 guys and the rest of the members cycle in and out. As we approach our busy season with shows, conventions, and more shows, we would like to encourage you to consider making every attempt to be there more often. Imagine the progress we could all make together if we put in a bit more time learning our music at home and showed up at more rehearsals.

I am looking forward to the day that we announce a new piece of music, give out the learning tools, and then show up for our first read of the music and every member is ready to go with no music. Can you imagine what our director could do with that?

I am proud to be a member of this chorus and look forward to the development we can all achieve together over the next few months.



## **Jackpot! Comes Through**

by Flip Sonneman

Receiving a Singing Valentine can mean so much. Not just the how, but the when and where plays a big part in it. The bigger the “audience”, the more impact it has. I had arranged for my wife to get a Singing Valentine at the monthly meeting, on Valentine’s Day naturally, of a religious group to which she belongs. Normally, there are about 50 people, mostly women, present.

When I get up on those mornings, my wife is generally long gone. I came out from the bedroom, and she was still home, looking worn-out. My wife has Rheumatoid Arthritis, and suffers from a lot of pain issues. She tells me that she wasn’t going to go to her meeting, and immediately, I know I have to do something.

It’s about 7:30, I call **Roger Andersen**, wake him and his wife up and explain my predicament. He tells me he’ll have the quartet call me and take it from there. About an hour later, **Randy Preston** calls and I have to get up from breakfast (might have been a little suspicious) and talk to him. I come up with an alternative suggestion - Debbie and I were going to go to dinner Sunday evening to “Del Frisco’s Double Eagle Steak House.” Randy didn’t have a problem so I figured I was good to go.....

For some reason, I thought it would be a good idea to call the restaurant and let them know what I was arranging. **Don’t!** I spoke with a manager who really wasn’t too excited about the prospect, mentioning it was the day after Valentines, there’d still be a crowd, albeit smaller, and I said it shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes for the two songs, etc. He was willing to go for 5 minutes, no longer, and said that I could save some money if I cancelled the presentation. Nor would he elevate my request to the General Manager who I knew personally and had seen and heard us at Afterglow.

I let it go, but figured it wasn’t fair to **Jackpot** to squeeze them into a 5 minute window or get a “look” from a manager when they came in. I called Randy, left him a message about my call to the restaurant and that I thought it best to cancel, given the distance, etc. Fast forward to Sunday afternoon, we’re getting ready to go and Randy calls and asks if everything was still a “go”. Uh-oh! I explained what happened, and he offered to have **Jackpot** deliver the Singing Valentine during the week when it wouldn’t be a surprise and Debbie would still probably get a **big bang** from it.

I suggested Monday afternoon at the Nathan Adelson Hospice at Mountain View Hospital when my wife would be there in her role as a pet therapist with our min-pin, Levi. Randy said the timing was right - they were doing an anniversary presentation and could do both gigs. During dinner, Debbie asked about the Singing Valentine program, how it was going, etc., and I told her it was only Friday through Sunday, yadda-yadda-yadda. She actually posted a comment on Facebook during dinner, saying she was expecting something to happen, but nothing yet.

**Jackpot** shows up at Hospice on Monday, Debbie was paged to the front desk, and almost came to tears. One of the patients she had visited with Levi heard the guys and asked if they would come in and sing to her. True to the Barbershop spirit of “singing their part and bringing joy to every heart”, **Jackpot** drew an inside-straight-flush, a winner!

**And Here's.....Greg Dreyer**  
Executive Vice President

My position with the Board of Directors is a new one and sometimes will need clarification and definition. So far, I've been involved in the financial stability for the chorus. I have worked with Peter Feeney, Roger Andersen and will soon involve Roger Buehrer on a committee to assist in getting grants and sponsors.

We have requested two grants; one from the Harmony Foundation (BHS) and the other from the Nevada Arts Council. We have been approved for \$1500.00 and \$773.00, respectively. This money has been earmarked for the April 25<sup>th</sup> show, "Men, Men & Men" to assist with any expenses.

Another function of my position is to provide fundraising opportunities for the chorus. I have pursued two such events in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters of 2015; 1) a Pancake Breakfast on or around Father's Day and 2) the selling of fireworks in a booth 6/28-7/4. Both of these opportunities will need full participation for the members of the chorus. Sign-up sheets are, or will be, available.

**Personal Responsibility; What it is to me!**

This can mean various things to each member of the chorus. I have broken it down for myself and this may serve as an example for others:

**Attendance:** If not ill, on vacation or otherwise obligated, I will attend **all** chorus rehearsals and events.

**Preparedness:** I will be confident in my notes and words for each piece of music. I will use the learning CD's and any other tools made available to me.

**Scheduling:** It will be a priority to make a commitment to participate in rehearsals, shows, fundraisers, and conventions. These items will be on my calendar, so I am prepared. Chorus events will be a priority.

**Administration:** I will serve in some capacity in the structure of the chorus; Board of Directors, committees, etc.

**Socially:** I will extend myself to fellow chorus members, and will especially be friendly to potential members and guests.

**Quartetting:** I will be in a quartet whenever possible and will strive to meet the musical goals of the chorus within the quartet. I will make every attempt to be available for shows, etc.

**I know that I will never be perfect or without flaws, but my effort can still be 100%**

Goal setting is important in establishing where you've been and where you are going. A usable acronym for goal setting is **SMART:**

S- Simple. Don't get too elaborate.

M- Measurable. Give it a number.

A – Actionable. Something that will need you to do something.

R – Realistic. Don't set up something you know you won't accomplish.

T – Time Bound. Give it a specific time frame.

Example:

(S) - My goal is to be prepared for chorus rehearsal.

(M) – I will be able to stand on the performance risers without music three weeks after receipt of the learning tools.

(A) – I will set up a specific time for music prep each day and put it on my calendar in my I-Phone.

(R) – I will accomplish this for 5 out of the 8 songs. The other 3 will take an additional week.

(T) - I will review my music and learning CD's at home 5 days a week for 1 hour each day.

## Harmony for Lunch Bunch

The Las Vegas Harmony for Lunch Bunch (HFLB), while still in its infancy, is growing in interest. The March meeting had more than a dozen guys present, and we're looking to grow. We've had a number of guys show up because they can't attend evening chapter meetings. The group meets on the second Wednesday of every month at the Four Sevens, 7777 West Sahara Ave. (SE corner of Buffalo and Sahara)

If you are looking to get into a quartet and never tried, the HFLB is the place to try it. There are guys from every part and all they like to do is sing, talk, eat and drink-- and not necessarily in that order.

There has been some discussion about adding a day to the gathering, making it on Saturday for those who work and can't make the Wednesday meeting and have a chance at the fun as well.

With all the work in chorus, the HFLB will give you a chance to sing some tags, gang sing and try your hand at a pick-up quartet. We'll even try sight reading and developing an "AHSOW" chapter. Don't miss it. If you have questions, contact **Roger Buehrer**, tenor, at 702-876-7132.



A recent meeting of the Harmony for Lunch Bunch included (lft-rt): **Rick Ives, Rich Coon, Phil Sonneman, Larry Litchfield, Dave Kennedy, Larry Pechart, John Hulbert, Martin Judd, and Joe Payton.**

## What Makes a Great Director

by Dave Kennedy

The members of our chorus feel that **Jim Halvorson** is a great director. Is it because he knows a lot about music, choral singing, and barbershop singing? There are others who know those things. Or is it the little tricks he knows of extracting the subtle voice qualities from the chorus? I'm sure others know that too. Of course, it's rare to find someone who knows all those things, but there is still more to **Jim** that makes him so great.

I suppose a director could get results by yelling at the chorus. He might even get results by pointing out individuals and saying, "You don't know the words!" or, "You aren't singing the right notes!" or even, "Your vocal production is lousy. Work on it!" But **Jim** can get better results without doing anything like that. The way he works the chorus is what makes him such a great director.

He tells the chorus how to fix things and how to sing better. He does it in a friendly way, often humorously. Above all, he can talk to the chorus in a way that inspires us to do better – and we do. He doesn't demand respect, he earns it, and he is loved by the chorus. That's what makes him so great.

Now, if only we could get him to bottle up some of that inspiration and give each of us a bottle. Then we could take a sip each day to get us to practice our music with all the techniques he teaches us.

***The Nugget*** is published quarterly and is the official publication of the Las Vegas Chapter of the Far Western District (FWD) and the Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS). The Las Vegas Chapter is the home of the Silver Statesmen Barbershop Chorus. The chorus rehearses each Thursday at 7 p.m. at the Good Samaritan Lutheran Church, 8425 W. Windmill Ln, Las Vegas, NV 89113.

## Here Today, We Sing Along With Friends

The following embodies the lyrics to "There Is Love Wherever There Is Song." Over Memorial Day weekend, 1991, the Gamble-aires held a "Chorus, Family, & Friends" picnic at Mt Charleston. By chance, they met up with tourists from the Netherlands, one of whom was in a quartet that had visited Las Vegas previously.

Thanks to **Rick Ives** for the letter and photos. They may be a little grainy, but you should still be able to identify Rick and current Silver Stamen **Jeff Swartz** and **Bud Adler**.

B.P.P. Muller  
Luybenstraat 7  
5211 BR 's-Hertogenbosch  
Teleph. 073-132995.  
The Netherlands.

Sunday 15 September 1991.

To Rick Ives and friends,

It is a very long time ago we did hear you singing in the picnic-place in the hills near Las Vegas. Many excuses for the late reaction; we are ashamed for it.

We still often think on that memorial day for us. We are very surprised to hear you singing on that unexpected place in the nature, and so professional good! More over it was so coincidentally because the friends of my son (Gents Quartet) has visit Las Vegas and did meet you. Arno Viguurs (the left one on the picture) is the singer of the group of my son and he recognized you on the picture we have made from you. How is it possible! Here I include some pictures we makes with you and some pictures of the group who has visit you.

We have been a long time in the States and after that was my son on holiday. And besides that: a letter in english is not so eysy for me and because of the unexpected beautiful weather (we have a caravan) and I lost the first letter in rough draught (!), comes this letter in oppression. Not good, but it has happend. Very sorry again.

And still many thanks for your beautiful singing special for us in the nature of Las Vegas (barbershopsongs are one of the most favourite songs I love!). We hope we can see and hear you some time on the Netherlands television!

Many greetings from my son and the 'Gent's Quartet', but special from my wife and me,

*Ben Muller*



### TEXT OF LETTER ABOVE:

To Rick Ives and his friends,

It is a very long time ago we did hear you singing in the picnic-place in the hills near Las Vegas. Many excuses for the late reaction; we are ashamed for it. We still often think on that memorial day for us. We were very surprised to hear you singing on that unexpected place in the nature, and so professional good! More over it was so coincidentally because the friends of my son (Gents Quartet) has visit Las Vegas and did meet you. Arno Viguurs (the left one on the picture) is the singer of the group of my son and he recognized you on the picture we have made from you. How is it possible! Here I include some pictures we makes with you and some pictures of the group who has visit you.

We have been a long time in the States and after that was my son on holiday. And besides that: a letter in English is not so easy for me and because of the unexpected beautiful weather (we have a carvan) and I lost the first letter in rough draught, comes this letter in oppression. Not good, but it has happened. Very sorry again.

And still many thanks for your beautiful singing special for us in the nature of Las Vegas (barbershop songs are one of the most favourite songs I love!) We hope we can see and hear you some time on the Netherlands television! Many greetings from my son and the "Gents Quartet", but special from my wife and me,  
Ben Muller

## In Praise of Polecats

by Brian Sellnow



I remember when I first started singing barbershop. I learned the songs we were going to sing on stage, and when showtime came I felt ready. We had a guest quartet, and I thought they were amazing. And at one point, they asked me if I wanted to sing with them (and at the time I didn't realize what an honor that was). I told them I didn't know any of their songs, and they said that was okay, we could sing a polecat. I had no idea what that was, and lost the opportunity to sing in a quartet with some highly talented barbershoppers. My brother was already in the society. I went to visit him and had another chance to sing. Didn't know any songs. Then I found out what polecats were, and when I became Program VP for the chapter I made it a point to make sure everyone had the chance to learn them. The Polecat Program ties our society together – no matter where you go, you have at least twelve songs you can sing with other members. The songs are easy, but you can apply good singing techniques to make them sound great. Learning the songs means you also get a “feel” for what barbershop sounds like. They're an invaluable tool for someone who is new to our style of singing, and a great way to introduce someone to quartet singing.

So why don't we sing polecats more? Some choruses are completely focused on their competition songs – they have little time for anything else, and certainly not on short, easy songs that won't even be used in a show. Some choruses waste so much time re-learning their music once a week that they can't squeeze anything else into their schedule. And sometimes the “old guys” have just sung those songs so many times that they're bored with them, not trying to sing them any better or differently than they did ten or twenty years ago and also not realizing that younger members need to learn and sing the songs.

So, how can we promote learning and singing Polecat songs in our chorus? I believe that we first have to “sell” the idea to the chapter leadership. Any activity we do needs to meet the chapter goals. If you get up and belt out a polecat the exact same way you've been doing it for years, you probably aren't doing anything except reinforcing bad singing habits. The words and notes to the songs haven't changed, but (thanks to our director) our chorus has made amazing progress in the last year in singing techniques. Everything we sing should reflect what we've learned. If you sang “Wait Til The Sun Shines Nellie” eight months ago, it should sound different, and much better, when you sing it now. Using the polecat time to demonstrate our improved singing skills will encourage our chapter leaders to make polecats a strong part of the music program. If we're wasting our time, we'll find something more productive to do.

Secondly, don't be afraid to quartet. It's tempting to hide in your section, lean on someone else and blend in with the rest of the chorus. When you sing in a quartet, you are “it” – any mistakes or bad singing techniques become glaringly obvious. But singing in a quartet will make you a better singer. If you feel nervous about singing in front of the whole chapter, find three guys during the break and work on a polecat. Don't just sing through it like you've always done before – listen to the chords and the balance between the three other parts, and find opportunities in the song to make it your own. The polecats are classic barbershop arrangements, and every note should lock and ring.

Finally, encourage others to quartet, especially new members and extra especially younger ones. A younger member might feel timid about asking to sing with others, so don't wait until he does so. If three guys need you to sing with them, don't turn them down. If you hear something that doesn't sound right, or that could sound better, don't be shy about asking to do it again until it's fixed. And of course, if you aren't up to speed on the notes and words, then take it upon yourself to learn them. Learning the songs and singing them well in a quartet will greatly enhance your barbershop experience and make us all better singers.

# QUARTET ACTIVITIES



## Broadcast

by Roger Buehrer

Broadcast continues to entertain throughout the Las Vegas Valley. In mid March they sang for the residents of the Heritage Springs Assisted Living Center. There they met Jim, a former member of a Bay area chorus who last sang 11 years ago. A strong bass, insisting on standing instead of using his walker or wheelchair, he joined **Bob Amblad** on the bass line of "Down Our Way" receiving a raucous round of applause. As the quartet was leaving, one gentleman said to **Roger Buehrer**, tenor, "Please come back.....tomorrow."

In early April, the quartet will be singing a first-date anniversary for a local pediatrician, Dr. David Barton and his wife. Dr. Barton, who is semi-retired, celebrates with his wife the anniversary of their first date each year. Following that, the four-some will travel to Mesa, AZ., and perform on the Barbershop Quartet Preservation Association (BQPA) show.

In addition to Amblad and Buehrer, **Rick Ives** sings lead and **John Waugh**, baritone. Chapter President **Albert Weiss**, tenor, and **Dave Kennedy**, bass, often fill in when needed making this a six-man quartet.



One of our quartets, **Good Times!** (above) deliver a Singing Valentine at the Health South Rehabilitation Hospital. Members of are quartet are (lft-rt): **Mike Connor**-Tenor, **Dave Pruszka**-Lead, **Greg Dreyer**-Bass, and **Dean Hunt**-Baritone. Our thanks to all of the quartets who helped in this annual project. And a BIG THANK YOU to **Roger Andersen** for coordinating the entire event and **Wes White** for preparing the personalized cards for the recipients. My apologies for missing anyone else who was involved in making this year's Singing Valentines program a success.



Martin Judd  
VP, Marketing & PR

## From The Desk of the Marketing/PR VP

By Martin A. Judd

A lot has gone on during the first three months of the year. Several members of the Marketing/PR Team attended Harmony West back in January and got a lot of good information on how to use Social Media to get the word out about our Chapter and its events. With the help of **James Halvorson, Wes White, Fred Green** and **Steve Salmon** (among others) we have been getting our message out on line. For those who want to learn a little more about Facebook, we are attempting to get a short class together to help you.

Another thing I have learned is that you can't necessarily do things the way you want to when working an event with other organizations, particularly if one of them is in charge and not us. This showed when I wound up having to do 4 different versions of our Men, Men and Men poster before all those in charge were happy. But, that's OK. You can't say we aren't getting the word out on this one. I'm not sure that many of you realize what a big deal this concert is. They expect a large crowd so we **will** be getting the word out about our Chapter. More importantly, there will be around 70 other singers performing with us who will get to hear what a great product we have and hopefully many may choose to join us in the future. Also, the events put on by the host Green Valley Presbyterian Church usually get pretty good coverage and are well respected in the Las Vegas Area music world. We've got a lot on the line here. There's a lot to gain but we could just as easily lose all of these advantages if we don't bring our "A" game.

The other night **Larry** (Halvorson) talked to us about what appears to be a little backslide in our singing habits. I feel that what he said needs to be reinforced. Over the past 2½ years we have raised the level of our singing a whole bunch. The problem seems to be that there are some who feel that since we are singing better than we ever have, that things must be good in our Chorus World. PLEASE, **don't** think that. Yes, we *are* singing better than when we started the Silver Statesmen **but** there is so much more that we could learn that would make us so much better than we currently are. All it requires is a little effort on our part. When **Jim** (Halvorson) shows us something new, take it home and work on it. Everything he's been teaching us builds on something he taught us before, so you can't ignore all those things from the past couple of years. You need to get each lesson down before he can move on to the next one. If you don't practice at home on your own, you force the rest of the chorus to spend their Thursday nights practicing stuff that we should already know. Most of us would rather be learning more new stuff on how to become even better singers. As **Larry** said, we'd rather be rehearsing than practicing on Thursday nights. Another valid point made was that the number of young people showing up on Thursday night appears to have dropped off recently. These guys take their music to heart. They want to learn as much as they can, as fast as they can. They don't want to spend time on Thursday nights going over stuff that they took the time to learn three weeks before. We all claim that we need to get the young people interested in barber-shop and we've done a lot to that end. But, what good does it do us to get them interested if we can't do what we need to do to help **keep** them interested and showing up. Starting right now, force yourself to set aside at least another hour or two each week to practice your singing, over and above whatever you may already be doing. You don't always have to sing. It could just be re-reading the words to a new song over and over so you actually learn them. If you want to practice your singing techniques, you can sing in the shower, the back room, the back yard or even the car. Many of us carry learning tracks in the car for use when driving. If you are in a quartet, remember that the techniques that **Jim** is teaching us work just as well for a quartet as a chorus. Practice them when your quartet gets together. If you look around you will notice that many of the wives and significant others are mouthing the words to a number of our songs. This should give you a clue as to which members are working on their music at home.... a lot.

We have talked quite a bit about personal responsibility over the past couple of years and many of you have stepped up. Unfortunately, as a group, we seem to have reached a plateau and need to re-dedicate ourselves to the level of personal responsibility that we once held ourselves to when making all the great strides we did over the past two years. When you don't take personal responsibility for your singing it doesn't just effect you. It effects all of us. Please don't mess up your brothers in song by not doing the things that you know you should be doing.

Finally, I want to add my congratulations to everyone (members, spouses, family & friends) who went the extra mile last year allowing us to win that gorgeous award for 'The FWD Chapter of the Year, 2014'. You worked hard and you deserved it. It's not just our friends that are paying attention to what our 'new' chapter is doing. We are getting recognition from people at the District, National and International levels. They are taking notice and liking what they have seen so far. With your help we'll keep them noticing all the good things that we will be doing in the future.

# Silver Statesmen Calendar

(Board Meeting - 2nd Saturday at TBD / Music Team Meeting 1st Tuesday at 7:00pm)

**NOTE: A date with No Rehearsal means not under the direction of Jim Halvorson. It may be a Dark Night, Social Night, Party Night, Summer Boot Camp, etc. These nights will be under the direction of the Program VP or Music VP and their teams.**

## 2015

### JANUARY

- 8 **First Rehearsal** of the year
- 17 Installation Banquet (3 Square)
- 23-24 FWD Leadership & Harmony College West

### FEBRUARY

- 14 Singing Valentines

### MARCH

### APRIL

- 25 "Men, Men & Men" Show (Green Valley Presbyterian Church)

### MAY

- 9 SoCal East Divisional (Santa Monica, CA)

### JUNE

- 6 "Vintage Vegas" Show (Desert Spring United Methodist Church)

### JULY

- 1-6 BHS International – Pittsburgh, PA

### AUGUST

### SEPTEMBER

- 3 First Reading of Proposed Officers
- 24 Chapter Officer Elections

### OCTOBER

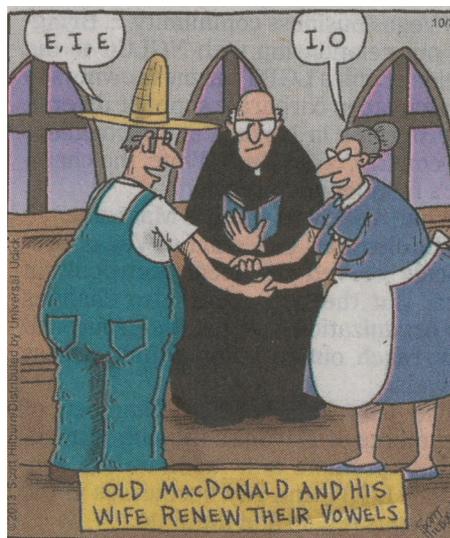
- 10-12 District Convention (Mesa, AZ)

### NOVEMBER

- TBD Installation & Awards Banquet
- 26 No Rehearsal (Thanksgiving)

### DECEMBER

- TBD Annual Christmas Show
- 24 No Rehearsal
- 31 No Rehearsal



***The Nugget*** is **your** newsletter and vehicle for sharing information, stories, and news about the chapter, chorus, quartets, and the people in them. To make it interesting and a fun read, I would encourage all of you to provide articles for publication, photos of quartets in action, our members, chorus on the risers..... Anything that you find interesting and would like to see in the newsletter to share with others. — The Editor