

# The Newyorker Times

The newsletter of the Poughkeepsie, New York, Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society



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July 2006

## Oldyorker Ed Johnson Passes

Adapted from a message from Bob Chieffo

Ed Johnson, Newyorker of the 1960s–1970s, passed away on 21 June after knee surgery. He lived in Delaware. Ed was always active with the chapter, especially handling the sound for all our annual shows. He loved barbershop. It was a big part of his life.

His daughter Joyce is going to have a Memorial Service for him in the Poughkeepsie area in the next few weeks. She would like to have the Newyorkers sing at the service. She will work out the details with Scott Salladin. She is also going to put an obit in the paper and wants donations to be made to the Chapter.

Editor's note: We intend to publish a tribute to Ed in the August issue. Anyone with memories of Ed, or other pertinent material, should send it to the Editor as soon as possible, and in any case in time for it to be received by 26 July.

## A BABS Member's Reaction

By Richard Glyn

I must agree with your article in the "Newyorker" as regards British entrants to contest quartet singing. The overall quality has fallen these last few years to what may be called lack-lustre in a diminishing hobby. Over the years having visited many US barbershop chapters, from your good selves and others in New York state to Santa Barbara, California, plus Austin and Houston in Texas, I find that the American approach to singing is more powerful not only in getting power chords when singing but power in dedication towards the hobby as a whole. ... Numbers do count though as shown with the "Ambassadors of Harmony" with 139 members on stage in Harrogate who performed wonderfully. The very best of the British chorus contenders with about 70ish members did tend to pale in their wake. "Vocal Spectrum" typifies what I mean by power on every level; need I say more? It's the American Influence that keeps the rest of us in the world singing, so never stop; GBA.

## Why Should I Try To Sing Better?

By Ken Krancher, Editor,  
Peoria's *Noteworthy*,  
from which this is taken

That's a silly question! Of course, every barbershopper wants to sing better—or does he? Motivation is a big factor that boils down to each singer developing an attitude towards what he wants or does not want to accomplish. For some, the perception of barbershopping is that it is just a hobby to spend time with friends once a week. The opposite is evidenced by those who have goals to actively improve their vocal skills to attain a high performance level.

Those not included in the above categories still opt for a better degree of professionalism in their performances. There are many ways available for one to develop into a better singer: solicit music team help, take vocal lessons, attend District and Society schools, and practice learned singing techniques every day. All require motivation.

The chapter provides folio music, tapes, and rehearsal vocal instructions. Sectionals are provided to learn notes and rhythm. The director and section leaders are available to assist chorus members on troublesome passages.

Vocal lessons from a college teacher or an accomplished singer can be valuable; specific vocal problem areas should be addressed. Specific vocal exercises should be practiced daily to improve singing techniques. Knowledge of the barbershop music art form by the instructor is helpful but not mandatory.

The most enjoyable week of learning for a barbershopper can be found at Harmony University—just ask anyone who has attended this special school at St. Joseph, Missouri, in early August each year. For those who can't afford an entire week, enjoy a weekend at a District school ... and receive excellent instruction in several courses. Occasionally, a visit to the chapter from a Society music specialist can be arranged.

One can tape-record rehearsal instructions to aid in practicing vocal techniques and songs. In the seven days between rehearsals, reserve some time each day for basic vocal exercises, learning songs, and practicing in front of a mirror to observe your presentation, (See "Better" on Page 3)

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- Chorus Director . . . . . Renée Silverstein
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**Meetings**

**Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m.**

**First Reformed Church**

**70 Hooker Avenue**

**Poughkeepsie, New York**

**ALL SINGING MEN WELCOME**

Website address . . . . . [www.newyorkerschorus.org](http://www.newyorkerschorus.org)

**Poughkeepsie Chapter**

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the Poughkeepsie Chapter shall be:  
To perpetuate the art of Barbershop Harmony, and  
To promote and provide opportunities for vocal harmony activities for its members and potential members such as, but not limited to,  
    Quartetting,  
    Vocal crafts and techniques,  
    Coaching,  
    Chorus singing, and  
    Competitive preparation and participation,  
and  
To provide public appreciation of barbershop harmony through public and charitable performances, and  
To promote good fellowship and camaraderie among its Membership, and  
To foster and enhance the ideals and principles of the Barbershop Harmony Society



- 2-9 Jul International Convention and Contests, Conesco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis, IN**
- 12 Jul Performance, Bartlett Park (across from church)—Arrive 7 p.m., perform 7:30 p.m. Uniform: short-sleeved white shirt, musical tie, black pants, black shoes and socks.
- 13 Jul Rain date for Bartlett Park performance
- 25 Jul Performance, Harriman State Park, off Seven Lakes Road—Arrive 6 p.m., perform 7 p.m. Uniform as above.
- 26 Jul Performance, Meiser Park, Wappingers Falls (gazebo at corner of Main St. and Rte. 9D)—arrive 6 p.m., perform 7 p.m. Uniform as above.
- 23 Aug National Anthem for Renegades, Dutchess Stadium—arrive 6 p.m., perform 7 p.m. Uniform as above.
- 21 Oct Performance at Castle Point VA Medical Center—arrive 9:30 a.m., perform 10:30 a.m.
- 27,28 Oct NE District Convention, Providence, RI**

**DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE  
26 JULY**

**Happy Birthdays in July:**

Werner Schanzenbach	3
Patricia Koman	12
Tony Krzywicki	12
Bob Hitchcock	13
Bob Waltke	14
Charlie Cortellino	28
Breck Martyn	28

**Happy Anniversaries in July:**

Dick and Lyndell Schaffer	13
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*Directions*

*by Renée Silverstein*

Our editor has asked for a feature column to appear monthly in the newsletter with a heading "Directions." Since I give directions, I guess that means me. So instead of standing in front of you weekly randomly saying stuff during the physical warm-up time I'll say it here.

There is a group for barbershop directors on the Web; discussions, questions, and sharing of (Continued on Page 3)

**Directions** (From Page 2)

information about what we ask of our singers on a weekly basis (and how to get it) are commonplace. A director by the name of Steve Shannon summed up what our musical leaders are looking for. I wouldn't dream of paraphrasing, he said it so well. Take a really deep breath and read on.

"During my 50+ years of directing, conducting, and performing (vocal and instrumental), I have developed a great respect for the skill and artistry of most musicians. But my greatest respect is for those who pursue excellence in the Barbershop artform. Here's why:

"In addition to the skills needed by instrumentalists and other singers, we ask our vocalists to create continually consonant sound—sustaining every tone, tuning every chord, matching every vowel, turning every diphthong, articulating every consonant, expressing every emotion, in precisely the right relationship with the other singers to produce the optimum 'ring.' (And, of course, we want them to maintain this quality while performing complex choreography!)

"And here's the bonus: while they are doing all of that, we expect them to adjust to whatever nuances in tempo, volume and phrasing that their chorus Director feels at the moment!!

"I know of no other musical art form that even comes close to needing the skills required of top barbershoppers; not opera, not jazz, not scat, not Broadway musicals, not ensembles, not marching bands, not drum corps—none—and we get this from singers, most of whom have no formal musical training!!!"

I probably could have said all that; so could John and Steve. But George Trigg only wanted a column, and if the three of us collaborated you'd be reading our words well into December. But you do know we have asked for all of those things, just not all at once.

I am going to add a few words of my own, referring back to the singers maintaining quality while doing choreography. I truly feel that choreography is moving body parts together and that stage presence is using your body to sell the song. I prefer the last part of that sentence especially in ballads. We need to look INTO the song, to let the music and lyrics determine how it is to be sung. Maybe that sounds "unmacho" to some, but if we want to entertain, that's the way it has to be.

Til next time.

Renée

Editor's note: Renée pointed out that John and Steve could have said much of this. Relative to that remark, the fact is that both of them are also directors, although they have the modifier "Assistant" in their titles, and we hope that both of them will contribute to this column from time to time.

**Better** (From Page 3)

and practicing in front of a mirror to observe your presentation. Fortunately, age is not a significant factor in singing ability. Many top Society singers are beyond the age of re-

tirement and accomplish vocal improvement through diligent practice and a desire to perform at their best.

The time to start is now!

**Learning Your Part**

By Dr. Dave Anderson  
for the Gentlemen of Fortune  
From Greater Montréal's *Mini-Pitch*,  
Murray Phillips, Editor

These days we often work on notes and words by listening to a recording purchased from the Society or recorded at a rehearsal. Sometimes chorus organizations also provide auditory learning aids. Here are some pointers to make this learning method as productive and useful as possible.

**Preparation: Cultivate Familiarity**

Care about doing the best you can do. The intention to do well increases the quality of your attention. Attention to the task is a major determiner of success.

Listen to the selection all the way through in order to get a sense of the whole. Listen for the song's structure, its melodic line, its harmonic pattern, its word meanings, its word sounds, and its emotional content. Imagine body expression that matches what you hear.

Find an efficient way of returning to the song's beginning point: one song per tape, counting the time to rewind, taping in both directions, etc.

**Repetition: Establishing Neural Pathways**

Listen without singing until each note, as it comes, is not surprising but expected.

See the rise and fall of the notes as you hear them. Move your hand up and down to the notes' rise and fall. Watch the music if appropriate.

When each note is expected before you hear it, start to sing along softly so that the recording predominates. Continue this way until your voice matches the words and notes of the recording. Repeat until every word sound, note and breath is the same.

Attend to tempo, quality, and volume so that the recording is leading your learning and your voice is "inside" the sound of the recording. Follow rather than lead.

Now start turning the balance control to begin eliminating your part and hearing more and more of the other parts. If your player has no balance control, use a headset and place the earphone away from your ear.

**Make Time your Friend**

Work in a time frame of 10–15 minutes at a time. Stay within your attention span time. Work at it often. Several times a day works well, but don't miss a day if you can help it.

Recognize that your brain is working on this task unconsciously as well as consciously. You will notice progress between sessions.

Decide to use as much time as you need. Some are faster, some slower at this skill. (See "Learning" on Page 4)

**Learning** *(From Page 3)*

Take the time and be content with it. You will probably get faster at it over time.

**Other Options to Consider**

Listen to small sections and memorize them one at a time.

Use the repeat function of a CD player or Mini-disc player.

Deal with subsequent changes to the original by under-

standing and accepting the reasons for the change and relating the change to the original.

Eventually, sing your part while audiating the other parts (hearing them in your mind).

From time to time, sing with the music to give yourself a visual check.

Cultivate patience with yourself to persist and achieve success. Set aside any frustrations you might feel and choose to be aware of your own progress.

Write out the words by hand to assist in memorization.

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Website for Poughkeepsie Newyorkers: <<http://www.newyorkerschorus.org>>