



The **Undertone**



What's Happening in the Burlington, Vermont, Chapter
 Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet singing in America, Inc.
 Member of the great Northeastern District since 1947.

We meet Tuesdays 7:00 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier School, Winooski, Vermont -- Call 802 985-8714

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Gary Bolles reveals secrets of the universe to GMC!

by Jerry Walter, Editor



Photo Jerry Walter, Editor
Gary Bolles gives the high sign to Green Mountain Chorus members last weekend at Lone Pine Campground. [Well, not exactly “secrets of the Universe” – but Chorus Coach Gary Bolles’ presentation last weekend was a wonderful and enlightening event. Here is your Editor’s version of much of what you missed if you were unable to attend.]

The secrets to good singing -

1. Hold your instrument properly – that is – your posture must be correct, including your face. You need to be standing with your weight on your toes, not so much that you need to clench your toes to keep from

falling over, but off of your heels. Chest high, chin slightly lowered. All of this needs to become a habit so that you do not have to think about it. Your face is important, too. It must be expressive at all times, not just when taking a breath, more on this later.

2. Use the singers breath. Breathing needs to become such a habit that it does not need to be thought of. Breathing needs to be diaphragmatic – that is controlled by expiring using abdominal muscles, not any other muscles.

Hey, this is nothing new! We’ve all heard this a thousand times — over and over. This time something is different, Gary has presented some of the “same old stuff” with a different twist in which the intended effect of all of the seemingly endless gimmicks we’ve tried over the years has been achieved with some very simple objectives.

In order to sing well one must make several learned traits habits. Singing is a difficult process in which your body must be capable of executing without conscious effort.

See **Secrets** page 2

Why local division contests are best!

by Jerry Walter, Editor

I have been meaning to express my editorial opinion on this subject since earlier this year when it created such a stir, particularly in the Mountain Division.

Historically, division contests in the Northeastern District have been held within the physical confines of the home division. Net, most participants could travel to the contest site, compete and return within one day.

As I understand the issue, the Northeastern District personnel responsible for running the local contests are seeking to save expenses by consolidating what was five local events into three. Sounds simple and logical --- huh?

The expense of any society event, particularly for our non-profit
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2001 Northeastern District Bulletin of the Year

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Chapter Barbershopper of the year 2001

Ed Bechtel

Division Barbershopper of the year 2000

Charlie Church

Secrets from page 1

The process of learning skills necessary to become a singer can be broken down into four stages:

- 1) **unconscious incompetence** — a state where we are not aware of the fact that we cannot execute or practice some particular skill.
- 2) **Conscious incompetence** — a state where we are aware of a skill but unable to execute it.
- 3) **Conscious competence** — a state where we can master something when we think about it.
- 4) **Unconscious competence** -- the state where we can execute a skill and not think about it.

Unfortunately, most of us are at stages 1, 2 or 3 when it comes to singing.

While we have been told many times about proper singing position, we need to make this "habit" an unconscious one. We need to **always** be in singing position. Remember "practice makes permanent!" Whatever you practice – right or wrong – that's what you'll do. "When you drop your [singing] instrument – the music goes away."

Prior to allowing us to practice the art of singing, Gary explained just how the human body makes sound and sings. From the aspect of breathing, Gary demonstrated to us that singing actually uses very little air and therefore does not require large breaths of inhaled air with its attendant noise and time.

In fact one need not consciously be concerned with inhaling at all. Rather, we need to know how to control the controlled expiration of air needed to produce a good singing tone for as long as necessary. He demonstrated that our brain tries to tell our body when it believes we need to take a breath. With practice, you can train your body to ignore your brain's insistence on breathing — not altogether, but on command. A good exercise is to use good diaphragmatic breathing to expel air in controlled puffs, followed by a sounded tone on the last puff.. Keep making the "puffs" longer and slower until you can expel air for as long as you want.

Gary likes the "Hung-ah" exercise to produce a forward tone and get the throat open. The "ng" part get the tone established without any vowel sound. Make sure your lips are not tense and can move without changing the "ng" sound. Shaping vowels around the "ah" sound shows how closely related the vowel sounds are and how little movement is needed to create them.

Barbershop singing is about **three** voices harmonizing to a **melody** sung by a fourth

voice, usually the lead, in which there are a predominance of consonant dominant seventh chords (barbershop sevenths). Good barbershop singing produces "ringing" chords — chords in which the characteristics of the frequencies of the four notes produce reinforced overtones which amplify and expand the sounds produced. In order for chords to ring all four singers must produce the same **sound**, with the same **timing**, the same **feeling**, the proper **pitch** and with the proper **balance**.

Always remember, the melody must always be dominant over the harmony parts and the melody should follow a dynamic volume dictated by the composer and usually by the arranger. All harmony parts should know the melody and should follow all of the nuances of the part sing the melody. Much of good barbershop ensemble singing is matching all of the parts to that of the melody. The only way to learn this is by unison singing. More than 30 percent of rehearsal time should be spent on unison singing.

When you do get to the harmony, remember three parts harmonize with the **melody** to make vertical chords tuned individually. So, you need to be able to "hear" the chords against the melody. Many times when you see a succession of "same" notes on a printed page, each note may be different pitch depending on its relation to the chord intended by the arranger based on the melody note. It is not possible to learn a harmony part from a single part predominate learning tape. You must know and hear the melody so that you can mentally tune your note to fit the chord intended.

Gary also gave us an exercise to help eliminate the "break" in one's voice when ascending or descending scales or other notes. Start with a midrange note and make sure your larynx is low as when yawning. Then raise the pitch by one-half or one tone and return. Keep practicing this until you can sing what ever range you wish with out allowing your larynx to move. Good luck.

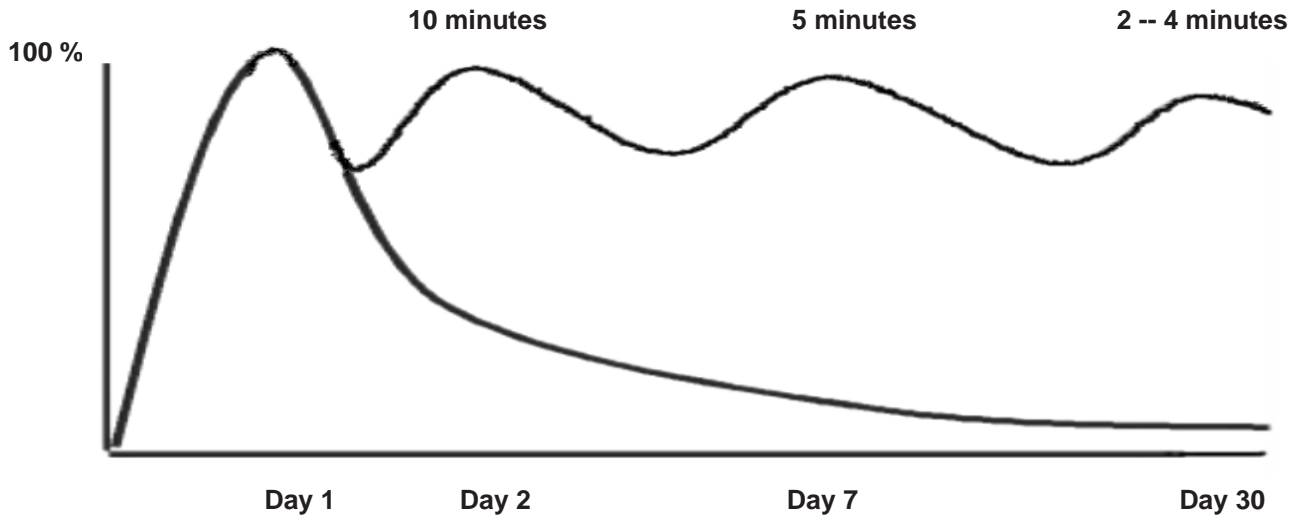
Remember we are always attempting to serve two masters – the **technical** and the **performance or artistic**. We need a good balance between the two in order to sing well. We cannot favor one or the other and make good music.

All in all it was a wonderful experience Friday and Saturday. All who attended should have come away motivated and pumped up. Here's to a great new experience in everyone's barbershop career.

Thanks Gary for a great time!

The curve of forgetting

The curve of forgetting describes how we retain or get rid of information that we take in. It's based on a one hour lecture.



On Day 1, at the beginning of the lecture, you go in knowing nothing, or 0%, (where the curve starts at the baseline). At the end of the lecture you know 100% of what you know, however well you know it (where the curve rises to its highest point).

By Day 2, if you have done nothing with the information you learned in that lecture, didn't think about it again, read it again, etc. you will have lost 50%-80% of what you learned. Our brains are constantly recording information on a temporary basis: scraps of conversation heard on the sidewalk, what the person in front of you is wearing. Because the information isn't necessary, and it doesn't come up again, our brains dump it all off, along with what was learned in the lecture that you actually do want to hold on to!

By Day 7, we remember even less, and by Day 30, we retain about 2%-3% of the original hour! This nicely coincides with midterm exams, and may account for feeling as if you've never seen this before in your life when you're studying for exams -- you may need to actually re-learn it from scratch.

You can change the shape of the curve! A big signal to your brain to hold onto a specific chunk of information is if that information comes up again. When the same thing is repeated, your brain says, "Oh, there it is again, I better keep that." When you are exposed to the same information repeatedly, it takes less and less time to "activate" the information in your long term memory and it becomes easier for you to retrieve the information when you need it.

Here's the formula, and the case for making time to review material: Within 24 hours of getting the information -- spend 10 minutes reviewing and you will raise the curve almost to 100% again. A week later (Day 7), it only takes 5 minutes to "reactivate" the same material, and again raise the curve. By Day 30, your brain will only need 2-4 minutes to give you the feedback, "Yup, I know that. Got it."

Often students feel they can't possibly make time for a review session every day in their schedules -- they have trouble keeping up as it is. However, this review is an excellent investment of time. If you don't review, you will need to spend 40-50

minutes re-learning each hour of material later. Do you have that kind of time? Cramming rarely plants the information in your long term memory where you want it and can access it to do assignments during the term as well as be ready for exams.

Depending on the course load, the general recommendation is to spend half an hour or so every weekday, and 1½ to 2 hours every weekend in review activity. Perhaps you only have time to review 4 or 5 days of the week and the curve stays at about the mid range. That's OK, it's a lot better than the 2-3% you would have retained if you hadn't reviewed at all.

Many students are amazed at the difference reviewing regularly makes in how much they understand and how well they understand and retain material. It's worth experimenting for a couple weeks, just to see what difference it makes to you!

As found on the sweetadelinesintl.com web site originally distributed by Counselling Services, Study Skills Programme of the University of Waterloo

Nominations for 2003 still needed

WE still are seeking a 2003 Annual Show Chairman, Singing Valentine Chairman, Quartet Vice President. If any Chapter member is interested in serving in one of the above positions please contact either Gary Brunell or Dave Merrill.

Editorial from page 1 organization, is the **total cost for all participants**. This includes organizers, judges and participants. All of these expenses are considered deductible business expenses for this group of persons. That is they can be spent as part of the educational, not for profit purposes of the Society. The purpose of divisional contest

is intended to serve the local chapters many of whom do not have the skills necessary to compete at the district or international level.

See **Editorial** on page 4

**Chapter roster now being updated!
Provide any changes in address, phone or email to Charlie Church**

DIRECTOR's

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Have you decided!

by **Greg Morrill**
Music Director

Another successful Retreat! Once again you guys impressed me with your effort and staying power! And the results were amazing! There were periods of great singing — notice I said periods not moments because they lasted longer than we have typically witnessed. I believe many of you sensed when we reached that high level without having to be told by Gary or myself. Hopefully, that's a motivating factor to make us want to reach that level regularly.

A couple of points that Gary made jumped out at me and I'll highlight them here. He said you guys were great singers "when you decide you want to be." That is, when you decide to apply what you know about singing — not just from this weekend, but from all your past experience — the singing quality goes up significantly (at least a whole scoring level in the judging sense). So what keeps us from making that decision to apply what we know?

Second, he said to improve you've got to change! If each of us as individuals wants to improve as a singer, each of us will have to make some changes. Doing the same thing we've done in the past will produce the same results as the past. So what can we change? It will be different for each individual, but the possibilities include: taking individual voice lessons, finding time to practice every day, taping yourself singing, starting an informal (or formal) quartet, even working out regularly!

I came out of the weekend very charged up! But as always, the challenge is to retain and build on what we did. In the short term if we decide we want to sing well, we will sing significantly better. In the longer term, if individuals and the chorus can adapt to change, we can grow to even higher quality levels!



Echoes show this Saturday

The Champlain Echoes annual show is this Saturday, October 5, with performances at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. at the Flynn Space on Main Street in Burlington. Tickets can be purchased at the door or by calling Joan Flynn at 878_9342. The theme for this year's show is "Legends of Echoes" — songs made famous by women.

Editorial from page 3

Holding local contests allows each and every chapter the opportunity to compete, observe what others can do, be evaluated and improve. All of these non-competing society members lose the opportunity to gain this valuable asset when the cost of attending is several hundreds of dollars and requires travel times on the order of six hours. Other advantages include the possibility of holding both chorus and quartet contest in one day, thus saving everyone money.

Holding centralized contests reduces the cost to the district treasury but increases the total cost to chapter members in total. District organizers should also realize that the **district** money they are trying to save came from members. Another aspect of centralized contests is that both the quartet and chorus contest include so many participants, even when not all of the normally competitive units compete, that the contest and A and Rs take an inordinately long time. Like until 2:00 in the morning.

District delegates should consider before they vote to change the locale of division contests whether they want to foster more and, thus, better competitors at the lowest cost per person or whether they want to save members money in the district treasury.

[Note: I had initially intended to do a statistical/monetary study of all the chapters in the district, determine their "center of geographical gravity" and then calculate the total cost involved in the 2001 and 2002 divisional contests. The numbers were a bit extensive and I have decided that the main issue is that the total cost of a contest is the sum of the cost for all members plus any administrative costs -- not the administrative costs alone.]



- October 5 -- (Saturday) Champlain Echoes Annual Show at Flynn Space 2 and 8 See article this page
- October 15 -- (Tuesday) Singout - Mc Cauley Square Warm up 6:30, sing 7:00
- October 20 - (Sunday) Package Show - Randolph, Warm up 1:30 -- Show 3:00
- October 25 - 27 - (Fri. - Sun.) District Convention and Contest -- Lake Placid, NY
- November 19 -- (Tuesday) Early singout 3 Cathedral Square, Burlington Warm up 6:30 -- Sing 7:00
- November 30 -- (Saturday) Holiday Ensemble sings at University Mall -- 2 -- 5
- December 1 -- (Sunday) Elks Memorial Service
- December 4 -- (Saturday) Holiday Ensemble sings at University Mall 2 --5
- December 8 -- (Sunday) Possible Holiday Show
- December ?? -- (Tuesday) Possible Show at St. Francis School
- December 21 -- (Saturday) Holiday Ensemble sings at University Mall 2 -- 5
- December 24 -- (Tuesday) NO MEETING Christmas Eve
- December 31 --- (Tuesday) First Night Burlington Performances 1:00 and 4:00
- February 14 -- (Friday) Singing Valentines
- April ?? -- 20 Week Club Banquet Date, place and time TBD
- May 31 (Saturday) -- 55th Annual Show Featuring 2002 Champs Four Voices
- June 29 -- July 6 -- 2003 International Convention and Contest MONTREAL! Sing up now!