

Minneapolis Commodores CHORD-INATOR



OFFICIAL CHAPTER BULLETIN

December, 2025

"YOU BELONG HERE"

VOLUME 81, # 5



TONY MASON

Mason's Musings FROM OUR PRESIDENT



"Make new friends, but keep the old; One is silver, the other is gold"

That couplet, like almost any good earworm (or Barbershop tag) has burrowed into my brain and has been living rent free this past week. Curse the Welchman - Joseph Parry (1646 - 1712) - who decided to put that phrase into print! Hadn't thought about this little ditty in years, and now I can't stop thinking about it. No idea why. I will leave it to the Neuroscientists to explain why earworms invade hosts.

I get the phrase's appeal. Catchy, and refuses to take sides. Newness gets its shine. Longevity keeps its luster. No false binary here. Just a tidy little completely catchy metaphor that is now part of our cultural DNA.

I write this a few weeks before you will read this. It's the week between our Holiday concert, our low-key and pleasant Holiday party, and Christmas. Aptly mirroring the season, it's been a Barbershop feast bordering on gluttony, and will now be followed by a 3 week diet.

'Tis, for many, a complex season. It can be the most wonderful time of year and / or just a bleak midwinter. This can be an emotional and confusing and lonely and stressful and lovely and warm and overwhelming and cold and beautiful time. And it can be all of those things at the same time, or it can be none of those at all.

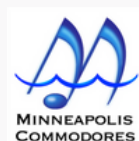
Whatever this season has been for you, I hope it has treated you well.

Which brings me back to the subject at hand. I've always had one beef with the "Make new friends, keep the old" thought. To me, old friends, new friends, doesn't matter. I'm just happy to have friends!

And you are a community full of people who I am proud and profoundly grateful to call my friends. Whether we have spent a little or a lot of time together, whether we have known each other for decades, years, or days, harmony accelerates time-to-friendship and holds friendships together.

It has been an absolute honor to be able to serve as Commodores President for the past 3 years. Thank you for your patience with and grace towards me as I have done what I could to help keep the music flowing and the group growing. It has been an eventful few years. What an amazing thing to have been able to serve with our outstanding board, the world-class music team, and everyone else who so willingly and ably steps in and steps up.

Thank you new friends, old friends, silver and gold friends. Here's to a harmonious and connection-rich new year.

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| | |
|-------------------|----------------|
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Thanks for the Pictures In This Issue

Jamye Casperson
Ron Lewandowski
Mark Ortenburger
Dick Riemenschneider
Marge Riemenschneider
Bill Walkowski
Dave Wall

And special thanks to our intrepid team of proof readers:
Bill Albrecht, Dick Riemenschneider, and Andy Richards



It's Great to be a Commodore!



I hope everyone had a great holiday season. *As for me my little brain* apparently needed to do a better job staying in Santa's good graces. I will start by apologizing for the lateness of this issue. It does say December even though we are officially in the new year. Our CHORD-INATOR software provider apparently decided, or more accurately their A.I. Help Desk Bots did, that we were *persona non grata* and shouldn't have access to our files. Santa's did come through however and assigned two of his best T.E.'s (Tech Elves), *Parenthetical Claus* and *Subordinate Claus* (aka **Steve Grady** and **Dan True**) to spend a month working through the night to get the toy factory back up and running. Just when I thought *I'm gettin' nuttin' for Christmas* they came through and delivered a most welcome present - we were back up and running. The Commodores owe them both a huge - Thank You! - for the contribution of their time and expertise.

A number of pages in this issue are devoted to our annual year-end Holiday Show. The Commodores always look forward to the opportunity to perform on stage with Minnehaha Academy's choral groups, representing one of the finest programs in the Twin Cities. The festive, enthusiastic audience appeared to have a great time, having almost as much fun as we did.

This issue also carries the final "President's Column" from our outgoing leader of the past three years, **Tony Mason**. You will get to know our new president, **Dan True**, in the coming year but I do want to take a minute to thank Tony for his years of outstanding leadership (which includes the covid era). Having a steady, creative, and relentlessly positive hand on the tiller through all the changes we've gone through has been very meaningful. And lest you think that you've heard the last of Tony, fear not for he has agreed to put pen to paper every so often, always in his own inimitable style, and provide what will surely be a few welcome contributions. Onward and upward!

"Art is how we decorate space, music is how we decorate time"
Jean-Michael Basquiat

GOOD NEWS! HOLIDAY CONCERT



The Commodores and Minnehaha Academy Choral Programs shared the stage on December 13th for a wonderful, heartfelt holiday program in front of an enthusiastic, highly appreciative audience. As always, great thanks go out to our music leadership teams that make this come together.



*Jamye Casperson
Director
Minneapolis Commodores*



*Dave Bechard
Director
Minneapolis Commodores*



*Karen Lutgen
Choral Director
Minnehaha Academy Upper School*



HALL PASS

*Dave Bechard, Tony Mason,
Dave Casperson, TJ Striblen*



BOMP

*Mark Ortenburger, Bill Walkowski,
Dave Wall, Hayden Trietline*



JUST ONE MORE

*Matt Richards, Ben Wanggaard,
Tony Lapakko, Nate Weimer*





ELEVATOR MUSIC

*Sarah Spedding, Grace Mason,
Jamy Casperson, Debbie Mason*



SOUTHERN RIM

*Kaden Ofstad, Dave Casperson,
Ken Wentworth, Kevin Huyck*



SWYPE

*Ken Wentworth, Conrad Ward,
Andy Richards, Mark Bloomquist*

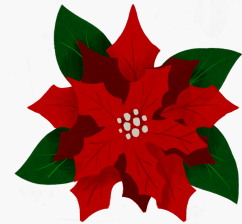


The Minnehaha Academy Chamber Singers



EAR DOCTORS

*Oliver Nicholson, TJ Striblen,
Morgan Baumbach, Harley Lentz*



The Commodores under the direction of Jamye Casperson





BOMP & SPIRITO

Dave Wall, Levi Johnson
Harvey Weiss, Theodore Chase,
Bill Walkowski, Mark Ortenburger



CINEMATIX

Shawn Hunter, Steve Grady,
Andy Richards, Scott Zoellner



MCX

Dave Bechard, Dave
Casperson, Dave Day,
Harly Lentz, Tony Mason,
Oliver Nicholson, Kaden
Ofstad, Andy Richards, TJ
Striblen, Hayden Treitline,
Ben Wanggaard, Conrad
Ward, Ken Wentworth

The Commodores under the direction of Dave Bechard





Director's Corner With David Bechard



News from the Front: A Director's Perspective

Every year, around this time I take a moment to pause and reflect on the past 12 months (which always includes highlights from my year with the Commodores). I also take time to think about exciting things in the year to come (which ALSO always includes future Commodores events). And this year – it was no different. This is an amazing group to be a part of, and I look forward to sharing that with a broader audience in the coming year.

Here's a look at where we are headed this year:

- **Learning New Music:** *We're diving into a fresh repertoire that balances challenging new arrangements with the "bread and butter" barbershop we love. These new charts will stretch us musically and keep our sound vibrant.*
- **Meeting New Singers:** *Our door is wide open. We look forward to welcoming returning members, and finding new brothers in song – ensuring the Minneapolis Commodores remains a place where any man can find his voice and find a community. And we cannot just rely on Google to bring those singers in – spread the good word and invite your local friends and family to join us on Tuesday nights!*
- **Entertaining New Audiences:** *From Summer Performances to our Annual Show, we're committed to bringing our craft to people who have not yet experienced the thrill of a ringing chord. Every show is a chance to reach someone.*
- **Making a Difference:** *Above all, we sing to impact lives. Whether it's uplifting our audience or inspiring a student, our music is a gift we share to make the Twin Cities a better place.*

Let's make 2026 a year of growth, fellowship, and incredible music. See you on the risers!

Jim Richards Chord Candy

Reprinted from "The Tag" by Joe Liles, Tagmaster - The Harmonizer, January/February 2004



THE TAG

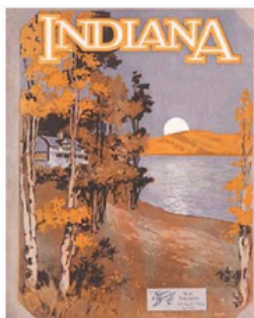
Joe Liles, Tagmaster



Hear the physics of a Jim Richards tag

I was looking over several neat tags for this issue when I received one from my very good friend, Jim Richards. He was asking about a solution for a little troublesome spot, and we worked it out and "walleye" (or is it "voilà"?). Anyway, Jim has arranged a lovely, fun tag for us. Let me tell you a little bit about this barbershop icon.

Jim discovered barbershop singing in 1953 while a graduate student in physics at Northwestern University. He sang a tag at his first chapter meeting and heard an overtone. Knowing what it took to produce overtones hooked him on barbershopping in general and singing tags in particular. He retired from the 3M Company in 1988 as a senior research physicist and now devotes nearly full time to his hobby. Jim is a 50-year member of the Society and Harmony College veteran faculty member, having taught the



Physics of Barbershop Sound for over 30 years. Active in chapter, district and Society affairs, Jim served as Society President in 1989.

An international contestant in both quartet and chorus, Jim sang bass in the 1990 International Seniors Quartet, **Grandma's Beaus**. Certified as a Sound judge in the original class of 1975, he served as Sound category specialist. He is now a Singing category judge and coach, having assisted in

developing the new category.

He and his wife, Ebie, have been married 55 years, have three children, four grandchildren, and live in Roseville, Minn., where Jim is a member of the **Minneapolis Commodores**.

Thanks, Jim, for sharing your life, talent, enthusiasm, leadership, and love for barbershop with us. And, thanks for this tag. ■

INDIANA TAG

Words by BALLARD MacDONALD

Music by JAMES F. HANLEY
Arranged by JIM RICHARDS

Tenor Lead

When I dream a-bout the moon-light on the Wa - bash, then I

Bari Bass

long for my In - di - an - a home, my home.

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2025 Land O' Lakes District Convention



The Commodores



Frostbite



MCX



Frostbite with their LOL District West Region
Next Gen Quartet Championship award



Just One More (still looking for that star)



Ear Doctors

If you hear anyone proclaim that the Minneapolis Commodores are just plain nuts, don't worry we take that as a compliment. Our primary fund raising activity is an annual nut sale. The program has been around for 43 years and up to this past year was overseen for 18 years by **Dick Riemenschneider**. His leadership and innovation set a very high bar for **Dan Williams** who took over the program in 2024. Managing the program takes a lot of year-round work and Dick hasn't quite sailed off into the sunset as he would have everyone believe. He's still actively involved helping Dan but a little more on the "worker bee" end of things. The pictures below represent the two major group activities involved in making this happen; bag labeling and packing. Thanks to the other Commodores who came together to make this happen. You don't have to be nuts to take this on, but it does seem to help.



Amalgamated Augmented Nut Packers local 777



Around Town



This VVLQ (very, very, large quartet) had an opportunity to perform for the third year in a row at the Benilde-Saint Margaret School's year-end Christmas program. This is hands down the most appreciative (and vocal) audience we get a chance to sing for. The only downside is that this takes place in the morning (8:15 a.m.) which means a number of Commodores who are gainfully employed don't have a chance to experience the full-throated cheers and standing ovation. Thanks to **Jamye Casperson** our director and event coordinator. Can't wait for next year.



Eden Prairie



Hall Pass



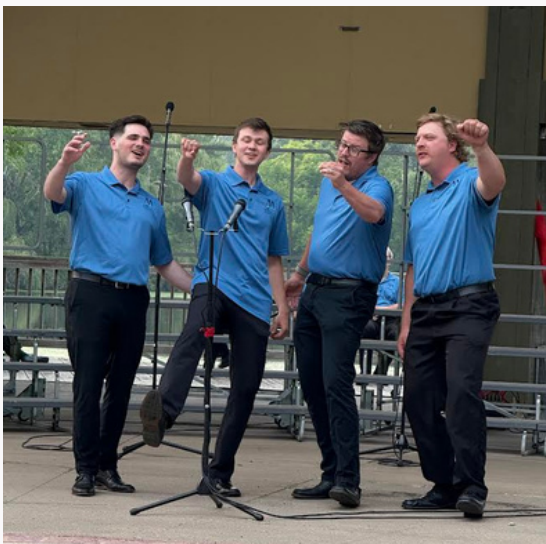
Messiah Lutheran - Lakeville, MN

A first time event for the chorus this year was performing at Messiah Lutheran in Lakeville. 35 Commodores along with three quartets and MCX sang for an enthusiastic crowd.

Around Town



Every summer the Commodores have an opportunity to sing at the beautiful Como Park Pavilion in Saint Paul. This fun event involves chapters from the metro and outstate Minnesota. Following individual sets by each chorus, everyone comes on stage for a grand finale - a patriotic set that never fails to leave everyone (performers and audience) with a sense of the power of music to stir one's soul.



Ear Doctors

*Roseville
Chorus,
MCX, and
Quartets*



MCX

Around Town

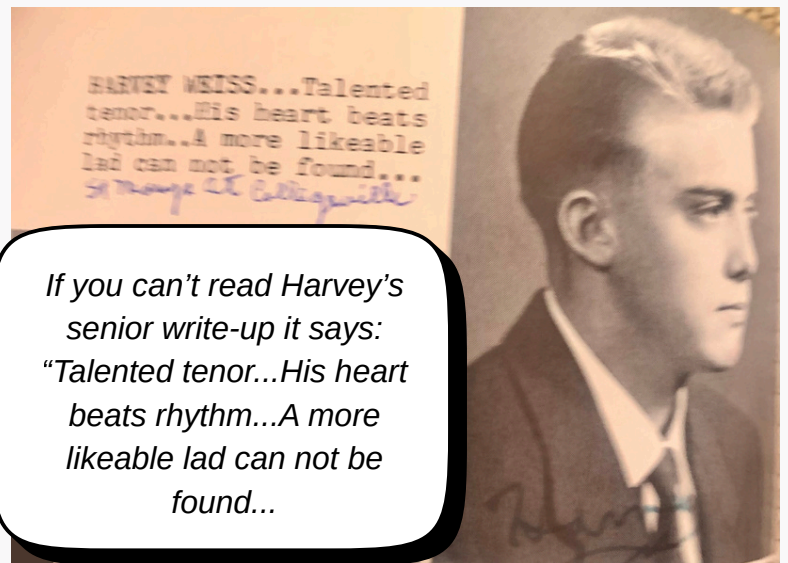
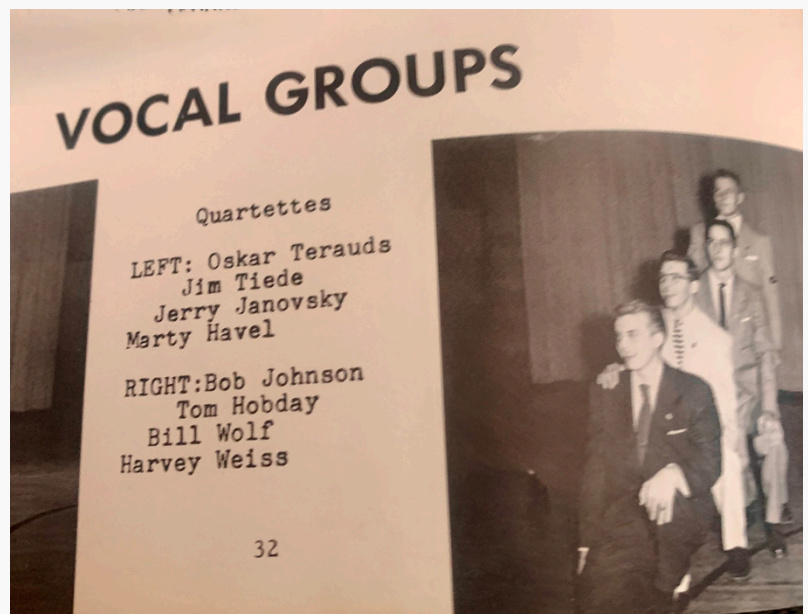


Dick Riemenschneider and Don Bartels in their holiday finery at our party.



The reformulated Go-4's (John Carlotto, Bill Walkowski, Don Bartels, Harvey Weiss)

*If someone says "Hey Harvey" anywhere within the vicinity of a Commodore, they're looking for the one and only - **Harvey Weiss**. Here's a few pictures from a 1954 Le Center (Minnesota) High School Yearbook.*



*If you can't read Harvey's senior write-up it says:
"Talented tenor...His heart beats rhythm...A more likeable lad can not be found..."*

Bill Albrecht's Craft Corner



Primary Overtones Created By A Given Note

Whenever a note is sung or played on any instrument, multiple other notes called “overtones” are also created. Some overtones are louder than others. If you know where to listen for them, they can sometimes be easier to hear.

- 1) The first overtone is 1 Octave above the given note
- 2) The second overtone is 1 Octave & a Perfect 5th above the given note
- 3) The third overtone is 2 Octaves above the given note
- 4) The fourth overtone is 2 Octaves and a Major 3rd above the given note
- 5) The fifth overtone is 2 Octaves and a Perfect 5th above the given note
- 6) The sixth overtone is 2 Octaves and a minor 7th above the given note
- 7) The seventh overtone is 3 Octaves above the given note

Note that these primary overtones create a “barbershop 7th chord” (which is also known as a “dominant 7th chord”) consisting of a root, a major 3rd, a perfect 5th and a minor 7th.

The overtone series continues beyond the seventh overtone but they are relatively hard to hear.



Bill & Kathleen Albrecht

Bill Albrecht is a 42-year member of the Barbershop Harmony Society with 31 of those years spent as the Musical Director of the Canton, Ohio, the Melbourne, Australia, and then the Appleton, Wisconsin chapters. He has taught at multiple district schools and coached many quartets as well as a few choruses over the years. In 1996, he and his wife **Kathleen**, were also thrilled to co-direct the 85-voice Melbourne Sweet Adeline chorus to a national championship in Australia. Kathleen joined Bill and started co-directing the Appleton chapter in about 2010. In 2021, they were both thrilled to be inducted into the Land O' Lakes District Hall of Fame.

Other Voices

This “Other Voices” section gives people an opportunity to sound off on issues they feel passionately about.



“Stop Preaching to the Choir”

by Harvey Weiss

My thoughts today, will be the same as my excerpts from an article I wrote for the Pitch Piper (LOL District Bulletin) in the May-June 2016 issue. At the time I was the V.P. of Membership for the Land O’ Lakes District in the Barbershop Harmony Society. I will let my words from ten years ago speak for themselves in light of the recently concluded (*ed. note - October 10-11, 2025*) and successful District Convention - **Up, Up, and Away**:

“Although the auditoriums at Divisional (Districts, Mid-Winter, International’s, Chapter Show’s) are usually filled up for most parts of our contests, (and here is the membership connection to all this) but how many in the audiences are there from the general public, and not just loyal family members and competitors?

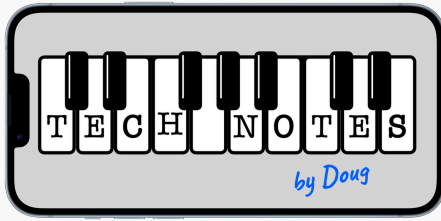
*Couldn’t we be using these showcase events as marketing tools to help us recruit and find men of good will to sing with us? What a grand opportunity to invite the surrounding town folks in the area to come and hear our craft and hopefully entice some men to come and join us. **Have our contests free and open to the public!**”*

I recently mentioned a comment from **Deke Sharon**, the Father of Modern Acapella, at our recent Reno Midwinter Convention. He said:

“Stop trying to impress ourselves with our singing and just reach out and entertain the public. Contests can be impressive to us all, but even more impressive to those who have never heard barbershop harmony before!”

We should try to impress the public more, not just the judges. Maybe then we can gradually begin to reverse this downward slide in our membership. **Paradigm Shift!! You Bet!**





The Pencil

by Doug Johnson



So, I was chillin' the other night, catching the local 6 o'clock news. You know, I'm a boomer, so I'm all about appointment TV. I had the TV on, playing a game on my tablet, and scrolling through spam emails on my phone. Boomers get a ton of those, you know?

I was also checking my latest lab results and trying to decide between that last slice of cheesecake, or a walk to keep my blood sugar in check. My stomach was grumbling, and the device on my abdomen was sending my results to the supercomputer in my hand.

The weather reporter announced that it was windy, starting to snow, and the temperatures were in the single digits. Cheesecake!

Now, you might be wondering, what does cheesecake have to do with tech? Nothing, but you'll remember cheesecake.

In our fast-paced world, we're bombarded with so much information from all over the place. It's like we're drowning in a sea of data, and we're struggling to make sense of it all. We need help, and that's where the pencil comes in.

In the world of music, a pencil is often considered as essential as the instrument itself. Whether you're in a high-pressure orchestral rehearsal or a quiet solo practice session, having a pencil at the ready offers several distinct advantages.

Using a pencil is like having a GPS for a long road trip. While your brain eventually learns the way, the pencil markings and the act of making the markings ensure you don't take a wrong turn and accidentally memorize the wrong path.

When you write something down (like breath marks, tricky rhythms, or vowel shapes), you're using your brain in a super cool way. It's like a multi-tasking party where your visual, motor, and cognitive brains all work together. This makes your memories stronger than just reading or listening.

Your handwritten markings become like visual clues that help you remember things like your breath, tricky phrases, or changes in notes. You can even mark these things on the sheet music for later. This way, you can avoid mistakes and practice errors that can lead to muscle memory.

(Cont. on Page 18)

(Tech Notes - cont. from p.18)

Deciding what to mark and where requires you to analyze the music and adapt instructions to your own learning style.

But wait — I can't just record everything and listen to it later.

This assumes that you'll take the time to listen to the recording AND remember exactly what you were thinking or feeling when you came across that passage, word, or phrase. And that can pull you out of the learning moment.

During rehearsal, things move fast; a pencil mark on the score shows you exactly where the issue is and what you might need to do to fix it. With a recording, you might end up fumbling with your phone in the hopes of catching an error or instruction later.

Writing by hand activates different brain regions than typing, recording, or just listening. The physical act of drawing a breath mark or circling a note creates motor memory that reinforces what you're learning. You're literally "feeling" the music through your hand movements.

When you practice at home, your eyes naturally scan the page and see the things you've marked and catch yourself instantly. With a recording, you have to stop playing, scrub through audio (and maybe video), listen, and then resume - breaking your practice flow.

Your marked score becomes a roadmap, a single integrated reference that reduces the cognitive load on your brain.

Now, I know recordings are great for capturing complex explanations, exact phrasing demonstrations, or difficult pronunciations that you can't really write down. The ideal? Use both! Record detailed instructions but immediately translate key points into quick pencil marks for that visual reminder.

Think of it like a cooking video. You have the video to give you some technique, but you still want all the measurements written down in front of you.

Finally, instructions change; pencil markings can be erased and changed easily.

Tech doesn't always have to be electronic; always have a pencil handy.





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UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 9-10 LOL Harmony Academy
UW River Falls Campus

Mar 10 Flagstone
Eden Prairie, MN

Sep 12 Annual Show
Minnehaha Academy

December HOLIDAY SHOW
Minnehaha Academy



**The Commodores meet
every Tuesday at 7 pm:
Oak Knoll Lutheran Church
600 Hopkins Crossroad, Minnetonka 55305**

**Guests are welcome but please contact us
in advance so we can meet you at the door
(Neal Mortenson nmortenson@usfamily.net)**

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