

The Year In Review - 2017

The International Midwinter Convention and Contests was held January 17-22 in San Antonio, TX. Two quartets, *Harmony Grits* and *Final Countdown* represented the Carolinas District in the Seniors Quartet Contest. They placed 17th and 18th, respectively, and their scores were three points apart.



Harmony Grits



Final Countdown

The 2017 Leadership Academy was held on February 4th and attended by chapter leaders from across the District. The Academy this year was conducted in a workshop format rather than the traditional chapter officer courses. The faculty was comprised of two of the most talented chapter development clinicians making the rounds in the Barbershop Harmony Society today: Beverly Greene, co-founder of the *Compellingly Attractive Chapter Meetings* workshops and newly initiated Leadership Facilitator with the Barbershop Harmony Society and Paul Ellinger, creator of the popular Supercharging Your Chapter session.



Leadership Academy attendees “pose” for a team picture

North Carolina Harmony Brigade 25th Rally

In January of 1993 the North Carolina Harmony Brigade held its first rally in Pinehurst, North Carolina. It was the vision of Charles Rose and was the start of the Extreme Quartetting movement within the BHS. The 120-man North Carolina Harmony Brigade met in Pinehurst, NC on January 13-14 for its 25th Annual Rally and to celebrate 25 years of success for Extreme Quartetting. The July-August issue of *The Harmonizer* carried a three page article, *Harmony Brigades celebrate 25 years*, which is included (with permission) below.





KEN THOMAS

Harmony Brigades celebrate 25 years

11 Brigades scratch an itch many singers never knew they had ... and now they'll never stop

In Mid-January in Pinehurst, N.C., the parking lot of the stately Carolina Hotel is filled with the cars of wealthy golfers who came to play the most heavily-used course in professional golf tournaments: the famed Number 2. Yet, when you step into the lobby, it's not golf banter you hear—it's four-part chords ringing down the halls from the North Carolina Harmony Brigade, assembled for its 25th year.

January 1993 was the first gathering of "extreme quartetting" as described by founder Charlie Rose, an accountant and Barbershopper from Rocky Mount, N.C. Now 73 and admittedly slowing down, Charlie still exerts a strong influence on the North Carolina Brigade, and is considered the father of all 8 Brigades held across the United States, two in Europe, and a "Brigade Lite" each year at Harmony University.

"This year we are proud to host singers from 25 states and two foreign countries at the North Carolina Brigade," says Rose. "Many of these participants travel extensively to attend Brigades around the country, and more and more are traveling to Europe to join those two Brigades."

Rose is among a large number of men who have at-

tended all 25 North Carolina Brigades. Though he does not compete in Brigade quartet contests anymore, he demonstrated his accurate lead vocals stepping in for Sean Devine and singing lead during rehearsal with the other three members of the 2008 champion *OC Times*. Tears



What attending a Brigade feels like

"It's the pleasure of nailing a great tag without the burden of learning it, and the thrill lasts the length of a whole song. It's the instant lock that you get singing with a polished quartet, but you're doing it with three guys you've never met, and it's a new sound and experience with each combination. It's the fun of quartetting through your chorus repertoire with fellow chapter members, but without the creative ruts imposed by being locked into a common director's interpretation.

"In short, it's everything you enjoy about singing barbershop, but you've done all the work before you get there; the weekend is 100 percent reward."

— Lorin May, Editor, *The Harmonizer*, July/August 2007

and a standing ovation from all 124 Brigade participants followed their delivery of "Wonderful World."

Looking at the assembled singers on the risers, Rose pointed to the large number of young singers sharing the stage with the veterans. This year, 11 young men from various colleges across the country attended the NC Brigade as scholarship winners.

"These are music students who have shown an interest in barbershop, and we can envelop them in extreme



Jim Knight
Knight Media
Services-
jim27615@
gmail.com

barbershop singing this weekend,” he said. “What you can’t readily see are the number of past scholarship winners who are now regular members after graduation.”

Among the first year attendees was tenor Christian Mealey, who plays French horn in the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Band. Stationed just up the road at Fort Bragg, Christian was there with his dad, Matt, a veteran Brigade member from Texas. They were among three father/son teams attending in 2017. And Matt was quick to point out that both their quartets made it to this Brigade’s top 10.

A total of 31 quartets competed in the 2017 N.C. Brigade, stretching the Friday night competition in the wee hours of Saturday morning. And of course the final notes weren’t sung when the quartets finished.

Hotel representatives tell Brigade organizers they now have non-Barbershop guests returning to The Carolina Hotel annually to enjoy the Brigade weekend. A few hotel guests were taken by surprise to hear the quartets practicing in the nooks and crannies of the hotel, and most enjoyed the harmonies. The N.C. Harmony Brigade is in its fifth year at the Carolina Hotel, and is under contract to return through 2019.

“A lot of our members are chorus singers from chapters of varying size, and some rarely get a chance to quartet. The Brigade places them in randomly drawn quartets that challenge their singing abilities,” says Rose. “We have had two quartets that started at the N.C. Brigade that went on to become District Champions,”

“Our music has morphed from Barberpole Cat songs to singing medalist charts from championship quartets,” emphasizes Rose. “These arrangements are more technical than standard chorus arrangements and challenge our singers.”

For Kenny Bland of Garner, N.C., it’s not the competition to finish first that brings him back after attending all 25 N.C. Brigades. “I love the challenge of learning

the new songs, but at age 79, that gets harder each year,” he confesses. “It’s a challenge to be prepared, and I expect the singers beside me to be equally prepared.”

Community outreach

Bland arrives early to Brigade to join others in quartet outreach missions to area schools, hospitals, assisted living and Hospice houses on Friday afternoon prior to the official start. “We visited one family where their loved one was non-responsive to most visitors, but when we sang, their eyes opened and you could clearly see the enjoyment, and that joy buoyed the family, too.”

Saturday morning brought the business session and a welcome and rehearsal for guests. It also allowed more mingling between members and guests, and learning more about some of the veteran Brigade singers. Paul Santino came south from Queens Village to bust a chord for the first time in North Carolina.

“I call myself a cocky Yankee, but I quickly quiet down when I get with the great singers here,” he said. “The bass and lead in my Brigade quartet are rocks!” Santino has sung with the Atlantic Harmony Brigade for 11 years, and in 2015 attended the inaugural European Harmony Brigade in Berlin. “There were 65 singers including 15 from the United States. The unique thing about the European Brigades is they are co-ed.”

The Brigade Chorus and quartets

Singing among a 120-person chorus is a new experience for many Brigade singers, and it takes the



Founder Charlie Rose with OC Times



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY KEN THOMAS



While details vary by Brigade, each participant must arrive thoroughly knowing his part for up to 12 challenging songs, which change annually. Weekends typically involve outreach to the nearby community, casual quartetting, a random draw quartet contest (with limited time to prepare after learning which men are in your quartet and which song you’ll perform). Most include a combined chorus show for the local community with a headliner quartet (proceeds help defray costs of the weekend and contribute to outreach). And did we mention a lot of casual quartetting? Registration includes music, learning tracks, meals, and a room that many visit as little as possible.

directing staff reminding them not to be heroes but chorus singers for the group sound to gel. And for this Brigade, the leads were in the minority, making the directors work harder to convince others to back off a bit.

Once the group started to relax and follow the goals and directions of the leadership team, the sound blended. When the curtain opened for the public show Saturday evening, a solid wall of sound greeted the spectators.

Chorus songs were interspersed with quartets of Brigade members who won the right to perform on the show. The first registered guest quartet to take the stage was Senior Quartet Harmony Grits from the Raleigh area.

A highlight of the evening was a long set by International Champion Quartet OC Times that rocked the house. Their mix of traditional barbershop with country, swing and big band arrangements kept the audience guessing what was next when the pipe blew. Shawn York singing tenor, Sean Devine on lead, Cory Hunt singing bass and Patrick Claypool delivering the baritone left the audience wanting more, and received a standing ovation.

The chorus took the stage back and finished the concert with a few more of the new songs learned just for Brigade.



2008 champ OC Times served as judges for the Friday night quartet contest and as the featured quartet on the Saturday Night Show, which is always a big draw for the local community.

different songs in the same room while waiting for the pizza to arrive. The top three quartets of the weekend were crowned, and members contributed to the Chuck Greene Scholarship Fund to be able to sing with the OC Times.

Mike Stehlik, a bass from North Carolina, is a hard-core Barbershopper who once quit his job the day before Brigade to be able to attend. Okay, truth be told he had already announced his resignation, but timed the departure perfectly. Mike circulated around the glow like a moth to a flame, looking for chance after chance to sing. "I sing with two chapters now, have participated in 23 NC Brigades and have sung in the Indiana Brigade since 2004," said the singing pharmacist.

Meanwhile Charlie Rose found a comfortable chair in the middle of the afterglow and enjoyed the music and fellowship like a proud father, rising occasionally to sing a song or tag. An evening toast to Charlie wrapped up the 25th NC Harmony Brigade, while Charlie was already making plans for next year.

The 2018 N.C. Harmony Brigade will return to Pinehurst January 19 to 21. The NCHB website, www.nchb.org, will be updated with 2018 information in the coming months. Information on all Harmony Brigades can be found at www.harmonybrigade.org. ■

Many younger men attend Brigades on scholarships provided by other Brigade members.

But of course the night wasn't over for the Brigade members.

The afterglow back at the Carolina Inn was madness on a grand scale. At times four or five quartets were singing dif-

What is eXtreme Quartetting?

The genesis of the Harmony Brigade was the Confederate Harmony Brigade in 1958. Its purpose was to provide an opportunity for the leaders of the Sunshine & Dixie District to get together following the formation of Sunshine District from a Dixie split. It wasn't until 1993 that Charlie Rose, a member and commander of the CHB, formed the North Carolina Harmony Brigade. The NCHB is considered to be the first eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigade and the precursor to the 11 Brigades that have followed.

A groundswell of interest in joining or starting Brigades followed the 2006 International Chorus Contest's excellent mic test by 122 Brigade members. A cover article in *The Harmonizer* a year later created further interest in starting eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades. As additional Brigades formed the format of the Brigade rally has evolved to what it is today, with each Brigade contributing ideas that improve and strengthen the Brigade while holding true to the original concepts.

So what makes an eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigade? There are several factors, but primarily the music selections, which are generally of championship caliber, and the format of the weekend. It's an invitational weekend for good quartet-level singers who are vocally capable and committed to learning challenging arrangements. While Brigade is not for everyone, it can be a barbershop highlight for a dedicated quartet man.

Brigade members who know the quartetting ability and preparation capacity of a prospect may nominate him to be a guest. A participant is considered a guest the first two years he attends; only after the second year may a guest be considered for membership. Membership in a Brigade does not automatically assign membership to the other Brigades. Participants who are unprepared will likely not be invited back to subsequent Brigade rallies.

In 2011, the Association of eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades (AXQHB) was formed to encourage and support the formation and operation of eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades and to provide guidance on issues common among Member Brigades. Anyone who would like additional information on eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigades or on individual Brigades may go to www.harmonybrigade.org. There is also an Operations Manual under "News & Info" which outlines step-by-step instructions for starting an eXtreme Quartetting Harmony Brigade.

— Duane Henry
duanehenry@ameritech.net



Spring Convention

The Spring Convention was held March 23-25 in Winston-Salem, NC. Three District Champions were crowned and District Representatives to three International Contests were chosen.

Chorus Champion – *Palmetto Vocal Project*

Seniors Quartet Champion – *Sound Counsel*

Novice Quartet Champion – *Anecdote*

Int'l Chorus Rep – *Carolina Vocal Express*

Int'l Quartet Rep – *Zero Hour*

Int'l Senior Quartet Rep – *Harmony Grits*

Final Countdown and *Sound Counsel* were subsequently awarded at-large bids to the 2018 International Seniors Quartet Contest. This will be the first time three quartets have represented the Carolinas District at an International Contest.



© Ken Thomas

Zero Hour

Quartet Representative for 2017 Int'l Contest



© Ken Thomas

Harmony Grits

Seniors Quartet Representative for 2018 Int'l Contest



© Ken Thomas

Final Countdown

Seniors Quartet Representative for 2018 Int'l Contest



© Ken Thomas

Sound Counsel

2017 Seniors Quartet Champion
Seniors Quartet Representative for Int'l 2018 Contest



© Ken Thomas

Anecdote

2017 Novice Quartet Champion



Palmetto Vocal Project – Mount Pleasant, SC – George Gipp, Directing
 2017 District Chorus Champion



Carolina Vocal Express – Rocky Mount, NC – Dale Comer Directing
 Representative for 2018 International Contest

Youth in Harmony Events

There were two chapter-sponsored Youth in Harmony events during the year. The Upstate South Carolina Chapter sponsored a full day workshop in February attended by 65 students. Dr Bill Adams was the clinician and the teaching quartets were *Let's Sing!* for the men and *Speed of Sound*, 2016 International Queens of Harmony, for the women. The show *Barbershop Through the Ages* followed the workshop.



The Palmetto Statesmen
 and
The Byrnes High School Singers
 present
Barbershop Through the Ages
 with special guests

Speed of Sound
 2016 Sweet Adelines Quartet Champions

Let's Sing
 ISC District Quartet Champions

Saturday, February 18, 2017 - 7:00 PM
 District 5 Fine Arts Center
 150 East Main Street
 Duncan, SC 29334

Tickets: VIP Seating \$21.89, Reserved Seating \$16.67
<http://tinyurl.com/BBS-Show>
 Call "Rusty" at (864)279-3872

Triangle Harmony eXplosion was sponsored by Central Carolina and Research Triangle Park Chapters in October. *Triangle Harmony eXplosion* was an exciting and fun day of harmonizing with other middle school and high school area male singers, learning how to MAXIMIZE vocal abilities, RING some amazing chords, and generate REAL excitement while performing together in a large all-male chorus. About 30 boys attended the event. The clinicians were Dr Bill Adams and Fern Sicilia with *Let's Sing!* as the teaching quartet. *Heart of Carolina A Cappella* and the *General Assembly* joined and the boys for the evening show (below)



Youth outreach also includes visiting local schools. Braeden Kershner, new director for the Charleston Chapter, brought a teaching quartet for a class on barbershop harmony at the West Ashley High School. (Photo to the right).



Featuring Other Styles of A Cappella

Several chapters featured a cappella groups singing other styles of music on their shows including Asheville, Central Carolina, Charlotte, Edenton, Greensboro, Greenville, Hickory, Hilton Head Island, and Research Triangle Park. A new feature of the Annual History this year is the Chapter Show Section with chapter show posters and photos.

Carolinas District 2017 Board of Directors

The Board gathered at the Fall Festival for a "team picture." (Left to right) Back: Tom Martyn, Bill Adams, Bob Johns, Mark Stock, Paul Martin. Second row: Dave Millson, Richard Harris, Steve Curulla, Richard Millard, Gary Thorn, Front: Bill Pope, Erik Lindstrom, Warren Fuson, Nick DiLorenzo. Not shown Larry Reinhart.



International Convention

Representing the Carolinas District at the International Contest in Las Vegas, NV July 2-9, 2017 were *Zero Hour* placing 29th in the Quartet Contest and *Carolina Vocal Express* placing 28th in the Chorus Contest.



Zero Hour



Carolina Vocal Express – Rocky Mount, NC – Dale Comer Directing

International Contest photos by Lorin May, Barbershop Harmony Society

Fall Festival

The Fall Festival was held November 9-11 in Raleigh, NC. The weekend included the usual events: District Quartet Contest, local tours, a variety of classes and coaching sessions, Harmony Brigade, opportunities for wood shedding in the AHSSOW room, the President's Circle dinner, and the Saturday night banquet and Showcase. Returning this year was the *Collegiate Challenge* with **Hawk-A-Pella** from Catawba Valley Community College in first place.



Nine quartets took to the contest stage for an exciting Friday Night contest. **Technically Sound** was crowned the 2017 District Quartet Champion. Based on votes from the audience **Vintage Four** took the honors as the Audience Favorite.

The Festival Team continued to add events to make the Fall Festival even more enjoyable. The Fall Show Jamboree was held Thursday night featuring **Avante**, a vocal jazz ensemble, **Heart of Carolina A Cappella**, **General Assembly**, and other groups.

Also new this year were a Youth Senior Varsity (College) Quartet Contest won by **Crosstone**, a Youth Varsity (High School) Quartet Contest won by **THEA ARTSYLI FESTYLE**, and a Mixed Barbershop Quartet Contest won by **Mélange**. The District's Seniors Chorus, **Carolina Statesmen**, also sang for score.



Technically Sound
2017 District Quartet Champion



Vintage Four
2017 Audience Favorite



© Ken Thomas

Crosstones

2017 District Youth Senior Varsity Quartet Champion



© Ken Thomas

THEA ARTSYLI FESTYLE

2017 District Youth Varsity Quartet Champion



© Ken Thomas

Mélange

2017 District Mixed Quartet Champion



© Ken Thomas

Hawk-A-Pella

Collegiate Challenge 1st Place

The Carolina Statesmen were one of five district senior choruses to participate in the inaugural Senior Chorus Festival at the 2017 Mid-Winter Convention. That event was so successful that that BHS decided to rotate the Districts' Seniors Choruses to compete over a three year period. The Carolinas District will compete at the 2019 Mid-Winter Convention on the Grand Ole Opry stage in Nashville.



© Ken Thomas

Carolina Statesmen – Larry Triplett & Mark Stock, Directors