

# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 1, No 1, First Quarter 2005

## 2004 Chapter Highlights

2004 proved to be a great year for the Choo Choo Chorus. We delivered over 100 Singing Valentines across the city, put on a successful and profitable Christmas show, and entertained various civic groups and retirement facilities during the year. Our Director hung around the whole year and re-upped for another, and Chuck continued to grow in his role as Assistant Director. Most importantly, we managed to show an overall increase in membership from the previous year.

From a financial standpoint, we managed to show a profit despite not putting on an annual show. The decision to postpone our plans for the "Phantom" to return was a difficult one to make, but our Music Team felt it was best for the chorus, considering where we were musically at the time.

For a second year at our Christmas show, we formed the Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus by recruiting men from the Chattanooga area to commit for this short term project. The addition of 17 voices to the chorus made an impressive improvement in sound.

As always, not all our goals and plans were met, but the year was a solid one to build on as we grow the chorus even more in 2005. If you've been away, come back and see us. Let's all dedicate ourselves to making Chattanooga even better this year!  
*Steve Grubb, the PREZ*

## 2005 Chapter Plans

The chapter held a retreat and set goals that included singing better, growing in membership and enjoying singing.

To sing better Paul has been to Director's school and we were coached for our fall competition. Section leaders are being trained to identify and help members improve their singing. Our singing quality has already improved.

The Growth goal has resulted in a membership plan to add 20 men to the chorus this year. An aggressive plan was approved by the Board that recruits from the many church and other choirs in town. A database of about 400 churches plus other choirs has been assembled and calls are being made to identify churches with a choir. This newsletter and a new recruiting flyer are in the works.

Part of the enjoyment of singing in the Choo Choo Chorus comes from the fellowship of its members. Another important part of the fun is performing and we hope to perform at least once a month this year. With a few parties and the fun environment of practice, we plan on continuing having fun singing. Our Prez noted the spirit in the chorus feels like it did 7 or 8 years ago.

Our annual show will be held in August. With the database of choirs to identify prospects, we expect to finally reach our goal of 100 men on stage as the Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus during the annual Christmas show.

We will again host the Fall Dixie Convention. Looks like another good year!

## 2005 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights:

**Annual Show**, August 6

**Fall District Convention**, October 7-9, Chattanooga, TN (we are the hosts)

**Christmas Show**, December

**Board Meetings**, 1st Thursday of each month.

## The Director's Column

I thoroughly enjoyed myself in Knoxville a couple of weekends ago. The Dixie District Spring Convention and Contest was held in Knoxville, TN on March 11-13. I had the opportunity to see a bunch of friends I don't get to see very often, sing a lot of barbershop, and direct the chorus in the contest. The only thing I really missed was competing as a member of a quartet.

The chorus placed 16th out of 22, the best placement we've had since the Spring contest in 2002. Our goal in this contest was to qualify for the Fall competition, which we accomplished with room to spare. There were many good things about this year's performance. For the fifth consecutive competition, we improved our score (only 7 choruses improved over last Fall's competition). If we continue to improve, we could jump into (or close to) the top ten this fall. This will require work, but it is attainable.

Our two songs were *When It's Nighttime in Dixie Land* and *Old Folks at Home*. I enjoyed our performance of *Nighttime* so much that I am going to put it on our website for all to hear.

Our best scores were for Presentation, followed by Music and Singing. This means that we are showing the judges (and audience) our enjoyment and emotional

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involvement in the songs we sing. In the Singing category, there are some small problems that we can overcome by concentrating on things like singing the right words and notes, at the same time, in tune. Overall, I was very pleased at our continued progress and look forward to the Fall contest and our other performances scheduled for this year. Thanks for your

## Profile of a Member

Lamar Owens is a very active member of the Choo Choo Chorus. He sings lead, is a member of the Scenic City Sound Quartet, is our Public Relations VP and is committee chair for uniforms, benevolence and the chorus website. He joined the chorus in 1996. He is a member of Brainerd Hills Baptist Church and sings in its choir. He and his wife Janice have been married for 43 years and have two grand daughters. Lamar is a Sales & Use Tax Consultant and works for himself doing business as National Tax Service. He was recruited by James Coulter and has recruited Jay Green who is no longer a member. Lamar has been Barbershopper of the Year three times.

## Membership Update

2004 was a good year for new members and we recruited from the Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus. These include B. Christian and G. Fisher. Others include R. Coffman, R. Felder, D. Randolph, C. Rogers and P. Snyder.

## Barbershopper of the Year

The Barbershopper Of The Year (BOTY) system is outdated. Generally a score is given to various chapter activities such as chapter officers, chapter quartets, attendance at meetings and singouts, bringing in new members, section leaders, committee chairman, and other worthy activities. A minimum score is required for consideration, and the person with the highest score becomes the new BOTY.

No one met the minimum score this year, so no award will be given. No winner can be interpreted as a good sign since it reveals that no one person is doing all the work — it is being spread around to a lot of guys.

I am proposing a new scoring system with several options for the Board to consider. My opinion now is that the previous BOTY members should select the next BOTY and this would likely produce a winner every year. Recent BOTYs are W. Strickland, L. Owens, B Owens, F. Jesse, D. Reynolds, and D. Collins. I would appreciate any comments. *Fred Jesse*

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

This award had its inception when Shelby Robert was our director. Its intent is to recognize a member each week who makes a contribution to chapter— in the opinion of the man passing the spike along.

The origins of the spike lie in the railroad workers being called gandy dancers as they laid the rails across the nation. The gold spike was the one of most importance, driven at the beginning or ending of a railway's construction, or so I'm told.

Gandy Dancers from the first of the year are Richard Poole, Gary Fisher, Wilbur Strickland, Ron Satterfield, Hobby Thomas, Ben Malone, Bernard Peek, Steve Wixson, Paul Blazek and JN Howard. *Steve Grubb*

## Annual Show in August

The Chapter's annual show will be held in Notre Dame high school auditorium on August 6th beginning at 7:00 pm. We will again perform "*Phantom of the Barbershop*" with Prez Steve Grubb playing the leading role. The song list is in the weekly newsletter. Steve Wixson has designed a set based on the Paris Opera House scene from the recent *Phantom of the Opera* movie.

There are lots of ways to help; most importantly sing, sell tickets, sell adds, help build the set, etc. Contact Show Chairman, J.W. Kirk at 706-861-3135 or email him at

## Chapter Mourns the Passing of Forrest Bugher

The Choo Choo Chorus lost one of its long time members when Forrest Bugher died on February 5, 2005. He was a lead and then a bass in the Chorus for over 30 years. His illness gave him time to plan his funeral and he requested the Chorus sing *From the First Hello to the Last Goodbye* and *The Lord's Prayer*. These are difficult songs to sing, but particularly difficult under the circumstances.

32 members attended the funeral at [Christ United Methodist Church](#). The eulogies were many and noted the generous contributions to not only the Chorus, but to his church, the Masons, the Shriners and his community.

Forrest was a Past President of the Chattanooga Chapter. He was always upbeat, outgoing and friendly. His big smile and hearty laugh were hallmarks of our meetings for many years, and he will be much missed by us all. *Johnny Jackson*

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and part of the Dixie District

**Officers**

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Weekly Newsletter	Dan Bruns	423-493-1880	debruns@tva.gov

**Website:** choochoochorus.org

**Telephone:** 423-265-7392

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building, at the address shown below.

**Choo Choo Chorus**  
**Barbershop Harmony Society**  
**310 East 8th Street**  
**Chattanooga, TN 37403**

# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 1, No 2, Second Quarter 2005

## The Vagabond Chorus

Well, it may be over stating it a bit to call the Choo Choo Chorus a vagabond chorus, but the chorus has moved its meeting place twelve times since the chapter was organized 43 years ago. The first meeting place (in 1962) was the Patten Hotel Parlor H. The manager of the hotel was a barbershopper.

More recently, the chorus moved out of Brainerd Baptist Church fellowship hall in December of 1995 and began to meet temporarily at the East Ridge Church of Christ until our next regular meeting place could be selected.

The chapter voted to move to the All Saints Academy building on E 8<sup>th</sup> street. We had our first regular meeting there on February 3, 1996. We also had our board meeting there after the regular meeting that night.

Over the years the chapter has met in church buildings, bank buildings, the American Legion Hall, a fitness center (Frye Institute then on Cherry Street) and the Siskin buildings on Vine Street. This is not including one-time meetings at UTC, various churches, staged meetings at Northgate Mall, Eastgate Mall, and Auditions for Admissions at a downtown barber shop.

At one time, when the chapter was struggling to stay 'alive', they even met at the home of the Chapter President.

The chapter met continuously at the Peck Hall annex of Trinity Woodmore United Methodist Church for 12 years, the longest stretch at one location.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Barbershopper of the Year

The Board recently approved changes to select the Barbershopper Of The Year, (BOTY). Changes include revising the BOTY Committee structure to consist of three former BOTY winners and two chorus members at Large.

A revised scoring system was also approved, giving points to members by the BOTY Committee for various chorus activities and elective offices. Points are awarded for: attendance, 0 - 75 as a percent of regular meeting attendance; attendance at performances, 0 - 100 as a percent of number attended; chapter officers, President - 75, other elected officers - 50, section leaders - 25, chairman (Valentines, show, etc) -50; quartet, active registered - 50, active unregistered - 0 to 25; Man of Note, 25 for first new member, 30, 45, 50 for next three, 50 each thereafter; Chorus Director - 75; Chorus Assistant Director - 50; Non-BOTY award winner (incentive given in the past) - 25; and points given by the committee for activities not listed above, but worthy of noting - 0 to 25. No minimum score is now required to be selected as BOTY.

## Singing Valentines

In February of this year we had another successful Singing Valentines program.

We had four quartets that did 90 Singing Valentines. The Sweet Adelines did eight. They were all great hits.

We made almost \$4,900, paid out about

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Vagabond Chorus Continued from page 1)*

It's going on ten years since we moved into the All Saints Academy building, and I think all the Chattanooga barbershoppers will agree that the Selection Committee, consisting of Paul Blazek, David Collins, and James Coulter deserve a real pat-on-the-back for selecting an excellent meeting place for Chattanooga's Vagabond Chorus. **ATTABOYS !!!** *Dave Reynolds, Chapter*

## **Gandy Dancers for the Quarter**

The following were recognized by their peers as Gandy Dancer of the Week; Sam Jones, Bob Blasdel, Johnny Jackson, Brooks Gist, Tom Keegan, LeBron Brock and Pete Snyder.

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## **CHOO CHOO TAG RAG**

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Volume 1, No 2  
Second Quarter 2005

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*(Singing Valentines Continued from page 1)*

\$2,400 in expenses and cleared \$2,500. We also have supplies left for next year.

Thanks to Frank Delaney who took the phone calls, J.W. Kirk, Pat Crowe, Wilbur Strickland, Bernard Peek and all of the Choo Choo Belles who helped. *Richard Pool*



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

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Volume 1, No 3, Third Quarter 2005



Photograph of the 2005 Annual Show *Phantom of the Barbershop* showing the set and the chorus singing and dancing *Lulu's Back in Town*. Photograph by Thomas Strickland

## Annual Show is a Big Success

Our annual show titled *The Phantom of the Barbershop* was performed on August 6th at Notre Dame High School to a most appreciative audience. Several people said it was the best show in several years. Steve Grubb was the Phantom and Channel 3 weatherman Thom Benson was the Announcer. The set was designed by Steve Wixson with Jerry Bradwell, Niles Fowler and Pete Jones helping with the construction. Pat Crowe prepared the script and Teresa Scott was the stage manager.

The chorus sang Chattanooga Choo Choo, Old Folks at Home, While Strolling Through the Park, Old Fashion Girl, Simple Melody, Lulu's Back in Town, Alexander's Ragtime Band, Always, Minstrel Montage with Fred Jesse, Bernard Peek, Erby Erwin and Johnny Jackson sang the quartet part,

(Continued on page 3)

## UCANSIGN2 Campaign is Here

If you haven't heard the UCANSING2 promos on radio or seen them in newspapers, you soon will. UCANSING2 is our Society's biggest recruitment campaign effort with the goal of increasing membership by at least 4000 nationally. What that means for us depends on how we implement the program, but includes more members, more quartets, more of about everything that adds enjoyment to our barbershop singing.

On September 12th at 7 pm, we will hold our UCANSING2 guest night at All Saints Academy, 310 East 8th Street. We expect the national media will bring guests we do not know, and this is a great opportunity to invite guests that we/you do know. We also extend an invitation to our former members to attend this exciting event. If

(Continued on page 2)

(UCANSING2 Continued from page 1)

every member would bring a guest....

Note there are substantial cash prizes to members who bring in new members; a grand prize for the most new members and a random drawings from a pool of everyone

## The President's Column

We have just completed another successful annual show. Many thanks go out to all who played a part. The set was wonderfully crafted, the singing harmoniously presented, the ads were profitably obtained and the tickets fiscally sold (they were cheap). Even the actors did a creditable job, except for that ad-libbing old Phantom. Everyone pitched in and did their part and the audience was truly entertained, and that is precisely why we do a show.

May I encourage everyone to participate on the 12th of September and bring a guest on that night? Our nation-wide campaign, *UCANSING2*, is scheduled for that week and we need to do our part to introduce this great hobby to as many men as we can. If you're a former member, come and renew acquaintances with us that night. The Belles will have some good food for us and we all will be afforded the chance to make new friends and find a brother in harmony.

Finally, please be considering who you want on the Board for next year. Our nominating committee, made up of past chapter presidents, is charged with the task of forming the new slate of officers for 2006. If asked to serve, please give due consideration and help out your chapter if able. The offices for President, VP of Music and Performance, VP Program, Business Manager and Board Member at Large all are open for fulfillment this year. Please step up to the plate and serve your chapter.

Until next time, *The PREZ*

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Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 1, No 3  
Third Quarter 2005

Editor  
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## The Director's Column

Our show was successful in many ways - financially, emotionally, and musically. We were able to make a good amount of money on the show by keeping costs low; this gives us operating funds we wouldn't otherwise have. From an emotional standpoint, I thought the show was very entertaining to the audience and rewarding to us as performers. Musically, although our performance overall wasn't what I hoped (but then, is it ever?), there were parts of the show that really stand out as great examples of what we can do when we work together. One such example was Old Folks at Home; another was Lulu's Back In Town.

Our next big milestone is the contest in October - we have time to get some coaching and get ourselves together for this effort.

After that comes the Christmas show (date and venue TBA - watch for an announcement soon!), the spring contest, next year's show (hopefully in the spring), and in between, performances around the city. We have many opportunities to share our hobby and entertain folks with (to quote the Phantom) "good, clean FUN".

Another opportunity to share our hobby is coming up next month. As part of the U CAN SING 2 national promotion, we will be having a guest night September 12. We will have a special program designed to show guests what we do and how much fun



*(Annual Show Continued from page 1)*

and closed with Night Time in Dixie Land.

The Parade of quartets included Scenic City Sound, Rock City 4 and Four Guys.

JW Kirk was the show chairman, Lamar Owens handled publicity, Tom Keegan was ticket chairman, Barry Owens made the program and handled advertising sales with Frank Delaney selling a bunch of adds. The show was a financial success. Thanks to everyone who helped make it a success including the Belle's who served food before the show and took tickets..

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer is a weekly award passed on from one member to another for service to the Chapter. This quarter's awardees to date include JW Kirk, Erby Erwin, Beau Christian, Fred Jesse, Tom Keegan and Steve Wixson.

*(Director's Column Continued from page 2)*

we have. I challenge each of you to find ONE MAN to bring to this event. You know how rewarding it is for you to be a barbershopper in Chattanooga - I'm sure you know ONE MAN who would enjoy it as much as you do. Make sure he comes to our guest night and we'll take it from there.

While I'm talking about it, be sure YOU are there for our guest night. Let's put our best foot forward and boost our membership! Chord-ially, *Paul Blazek*

## 2005 Calendar Highlights

**No Meeting**, Labor Day, Sept 5

**UCANSING2 Guest Night**, September 12 at All Saints Building.

**Fall District Convention**, October 7-9, Chattanooga, TN (we are the hosts)

**Christmas Show**, December 10 (Tentative.)

## Lloyd Gimber Obituary

The Chapter again mourns the loss of one of its members, Lloyd Gimber, who died July 26 at the age of 87. Lloyd, a resident of Chattanooga since 1957 gave forth with his first notes at his birth in Worthington, Indiana in the year of 1918.

He led an active life and when interviewed in 2000 he was asked when he would retire. His retort was, "No way! You got to keep moving to stay one step ahead of the undertaker, that's my motto."

Sadly his step slowed as he battled cancer for a second time and Lloyd left us, firmly asserting that he would return in time to be on the risers for our Christmas show.

His barbershopping career began 1952 when he joined three friends singing in restaurants, motel lounges and business clubs in Cincinnati. Their performance was mainly woodshedding billing the themselves as the *Memory Laners*. This led to 53 years of four part harmony, which he enjoyed passionately.

In Chattanooga he met others interested in four part harmony and four years later a chapter was formed. He was the last charter member still performing with the chorus.

His other talents included portrait sketching which he sketched at the East Ridge Flea Market in his later years, and ballroom dancing, which he performed at local healthcare facilities to the delight of the patients.

He retired from Cooks Pest Control after 25 years of service. He was a member of the World Wide Church of God and the Eagles Club.

He is survived by his wife Shirley and three sons and a daughter from his marriage to his late wife Mary.

The Choo Choo Chorus sang *Nearer My God To Thee* at his funeral service. *Pat Crowe*

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and part of the Dixie District

**Officers**

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Board Member	Bernard Peek	706-398-3104	
Director	Paul Blazek	664-1304	pjblazek@bellsouth.net
Assistant Director	Chuck Wilson	624-8635	chukmisa@voy.net

Section Leaders (Fred Jesse-Tenor, Hobby Thomas-Lead, Johnny Jackson-Baritone, JN Howard-Bass)

**Website:** choochoochorus.org

**Telephone:** 423-265-7392

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saint's Academy Building, at the address shown below.

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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 1, No 4, Forth Quarter 2005



## Christmas Show a Success

I realize that I am probably biased on the point, but I thought the Christmas Show went off pretty well. Most of all, I was really pleased with the number of CCCC members who participated and added greatly to our 'voice'. The several CCCC members I talked to after the show seemed pleased with it and with their efforts.

Secondly, it seemed to me that we all loved having the Scenic City Sweet Adelines with us. I will remember the sound of Silent Night and our Christmas tag, with us all singing together, for a long, long time. I hope and trust that this combination is only the start of many future ventures together.

Thirdly, we received many compliments on Steve Wixson's set and the children who participated. Linda Hudson organized the Kid's Paint Day for the backdrop and Marilyn Fisher, member Gary's wife, directed the on stage kids. Like any such large efforts, it had its snags, but came together nicely and added much to the show, as well. Special thanks, also, to Melissa Wilson. Without her help I doubt the staging would have come off as well as it did.

Fourthly, I thought the rehearsal at Northgate Mall turned out to be a good idea. Not only did we possibly interest some people in attending the show, but also the CCCC members got a rehearsal in public. As I recall, Fred told me that we had 42 people on the risers for that rehearsal.

Fifthly, the 'light repast' – pizza, soft drinks, and

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Our President's Last Column

Being no longer a lame duck but officially the ex-president of this chapter, here is my final column for this newsletter. Let me say to all the members of the Choo Choo Chorus what a pleasure it has been to serve this chapter the last three years in this capacity. I've been fortunate to work with excellent men who performed their duties admirably and made being the President an easy task. We kept Paul in his place as director for my tenure, had several very successful and entertaining shows, grew membership, and hosted some outstanding conventions here in Chattanooga. All in all, a very successful term of service.

May I depart with an encouraging word to all of us? Never forget who we are and why we're here. This chapter is made of men and their families who genuinely care for each other. This great hobby has brought us together and each man contributes something to the collective good of this chapter.

We are not a competitive chapter who aspires to win the District. But that fact doesn't make us second rate citizens in the Barbershop hierarchy. We are a chapter who strives to be the best singers we can be and entertain as many folks as possible in as many venues as are made available to us. We seek a balance between competition, performance and having fun. That's why I joined this chapter years ago and why I remain with it today.

Thanks again for letting me serve you these past three years and best of luck to the incoming Board.

## 2006 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights:

**First meeting of the new year.** January 9

**Valentine Fund Raiser.** February 14.

**Spring Dixie Convention.** March 24-6, Charlotte, NC.

*(Christmas Show—continued from page 1)*

Little Debbies – was a new angle for this performance. My hope is that it relieved Mary Strickland and the Belles, at least a little. I haven't heard much comment on the food and I don't know whether that's a good thing or not. Tell me what you think for future consideration.

Finally, I guess I'm a bit disappointed with the attendance at the Christmas Show. Of course, I wanted a full to standing-room only audience there, and it was short of that. My wife told me that it seemed to her that we had more people for this show than we did for the last Christmas show. I hope so. Perhaps admitting young people free of charge helped with the crowd. I do think that those who were there loved it and said so.

As I write this, I haven't seen the financial outcome for the show. I was told that there was some \$930 dollars taken at the door and that, of course, does not include monies from members. As you probably all know, our selected charity for this event was Contact of Chattanooga. They will receive a portion of the proceeds when our costs and income have been finalized. Betsy Donahue, Executive Director for Contact, attended both our rehearsal at Northgate Mall and the show, along with her parents.

This is the first show I have chaired and perhaps works out to be something of a warm-up for me as I assume the Presidency of the Chapter. I learned a lot, but the best thing I learned is that we have many willing hands to make the Chapter go. I leaned on a lot of people and got a lot of help. I am most

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.) The recipients were Daniel Randolph, Chuck Wilson, Pat Crowe, Gary Fisher, Brooks Gist, Benny Malone, Dave Reynolds, Steve Wixson, Lebron Brock, Roger Coffman, Dave Reynolds and Paul Blazek.

## CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 1, No 4  
Forth Quarter 2005

Editor: Steve Wixson, wixson@chattanooga.net

## The Director's Column

Well, 2005 is almost over and I think, overall, it's been a good year. We've had some great performances, a couple of successful shows, and a wonderful fall convention. We have some new members and new officers and that's exciting, too.

We're taking a few weeks off, so when we come back on January 9, 2006, let's put ourselves on a great track to another good year! There'll be new music to learn, new shows and performances, new barbershop craft techniques, plenty for everyone.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to everyone, and we'll see you in 2006! *Paul Blazek*

## Profile of a Member

Wilbur Strickland has been an active member of the Choo-Choo Chorus since March 1991. He sings bass and is a member of the Scenic City Sound quartet.

Wilbur has served the chorus as Assistant Treasurer, Member-at-Large, Membership Vice-President, President, and Music and Performance Vice-President. He was honored as Barbershopper of the Year in 2001 and 2002. He has attended and participated in each spring and fall Dixie District convention since he joined the chorus except one which he missed because of illness. He has received six "Man of Note" designations (given for bringing new members into the chapter.).

He has sung in competition with the Roswell chorus and now holds dual membership with two other Dixie choruses. He sang with the Confederate Harmony Brigade in the fall of 2004.

He served as the local coordinator of the fall Dixie District Convention in Chattanooga in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2005.

Wilbur is married to Mary Strickland (who received this year's President's Award for service to the chapter—our deepest thanks, Mary.) They have two sons, two daughters-in-law and two grandchildren.

## Letter from Times/Free Press

The holidays are filled with music! This past Saturday I took my parents to watch a show performed by the Chattanooga Choo Choo Chorus at Notre Dame High School.

I have never seen my parents so thrilled over a Christmas show. It was enchanting! I would like to thank the Choo Choo Chorus for their 'Concert for the Holidays.'

This show featured the Community Christmas Chorus and Scenic City Sweet Adelines, and it was absolutely filled with 'old-time' delightful music!

CONTACT of Chattanooga was chosen as the charity of which they offered to support with their show proceeds and we feel blessed as we work hard to help people in crisis or need throughout the year.

Next year, I would suggest that everyone put this show on his or her calendar. You will leave feeling enriched, uplifted and filled with the wonderful spirit of Christmas. *Betsy Donahue*, Executive Director, CONTACT of Chattanooga.

## Pat and Dave Remember

You all remember those shows on television asking you the question "Where are they now?"

I was at the Colonnade Saturday and I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of a former Choo Choo Chorus member who deflected to the "Big Chicken" Chorus in Marietta, GA.

He told me about quarteting with Tom Keegan, Dave Reynolds, Jack Lane and Claude Walker. He also mentioned Lloyd Gimber. His name was Lee Walker if I remember correctly.

Another ex member and assistant director of the chorus, Paul Stone, had the lead role in the presentation of "Smoke on the Mountain" He did a wonderful job.

In the cast there was one of our new members Alan Pritchett strumming on the guitar.

If you get the chance you should see the show. We had an enjoyable evening with a lot of laughs and great singing. *Pat Crowe*

Lee Walker sang bass in four Chattanooga Chapter quartets: Pals of Mime, Sesame Street Rejects, Choo Choo City Chord Committee and Almost Ready. He was Chattanooga Chapter President in 1981. I'm glad he is doing well. *Dave Reynolds*

## Final Performance of the Year

Alexian Village was the site of our final performance of the year and a grand performance it was. 29 men were on stage for the performance that was live to a capacity audience and televised to the entire Alexian community. We looked good in red blazers and tux pants and accessories. It seemed there was a good 10 seconds of silence after ending the show with Silent Night.

During the year we performed to nursing homes, Elderhostel's, Special Olympics, churches, funerals, civic club, etc. Our quartets performed innumerable times to many audiences including our annual Valentines fund raiser. Let's do even more next year.

## Evelyn Fraser Funeral

The chorus sang three songs at the funeral of Evelyn Fraser, wife of member Earl Fraser, who died December 6, 2005. They were Nearer My God to Thee, White Christmas, Evelyn's favorite song and Silent Night. It was a difficult service for many of our members who knew Evelyn well.

## Dixie District Thanks Chapter

We did it again! Thanks to you, we enjoyed another successful fall convention October 9-11. I have been asked by Dixie District officials and judges from across the country and beyond to express sincere thanks to each of you who worked in the convention. They all say that they love to come to Chattanooga because Chattanooga has the best team of people to work with in the District. I add to that my personal "Thank you so much." *Wilbur Strickland*, Convention Coordinator

## Board Holds Planning Meet

Beau Christian organized a planning meeting for the new Board that was held on December 22 and you will hear more about that in the next issue of the newsletter. There is lots of new blood on the Board this year and that means the new Board will need help from the more experienced membership. Several members did attend the informal meeting.

Our previous goals of singing better, membership growth and having fun are still valid.

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

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**Choo Choo Chorus Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403**



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

## A Quarterly Newsletter of the Choo Choo Chorus

Volume 2, No 1, First Quarter 2006



Photo of the Chapter on risers with George Gibbs coaching our contest songs for the Spring Dixie Convention Photo by Steve Wixson

### President's Column

Communication between members of our Chapter is a critical need. And not just our usual friendly greetings and banter with one another, but also input as to the direction the Choo Choo Chorus should be taking.

To that end, I am very pleased to see such efforts underway. One such effort is the newsletter you are reading now. Thanks to Steve, the newsletter attempts not only to communicate in a timely way to our current members, but also seeks to reach out to lapsed members, non-attending members, recruits, and possibly interested 'civilians'. If any member would like to submit an article, please see Steve with your ideas.

A second effort is Lebron's survey, making its rounds as I write this. By the time you are reading this, I trust you will have submitted your completed survey form and Lebron will have managed to tally the input. If everyone will give this survey the time it deserves, it could go a long way toward setting directions for the Chapter.

A third effort at good communication is Gary's refurbished rehearsal schedule. This change occurred due to a perceived need to have a real schedule, stick to it, and get needed business done. I've read articles and attended COTS seminars stressing how important the rehearsal sessions are to the well being of the Chapter. They stress such things as intense rehearsal time, warm-up time, time for fun, time for

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Dixie Convention—Job Well Done

Well, we were making plans to enjoy spring convention weekend this year in Charlotte, North Carolina, with other folks doing all the background work; but it was not to be. We were called on again to host the convention in Chattanooga.

In true Choo-Choo Chorus fashion, we pulled it off without a big glitch. We can do this because we work as a team – everyone doing their part. We now have a reputation in the Dixie District for being the “best” group to work with in putting on a convention.

In a conversation I had during the weekend with a former Choo-Choo chorus member (also a former member of a winning quartet), he described the Choo-Choo Chorus as a fraternity, a true brotherhood of caring people. You know, it's good to be thought of in that manner.

I have been asked by Dixie District officials and judges from across the country and beyond to express sincere thanks to each of you who worked in the convention. They all say that they love to come to Chattanooga because Chattanooga has the best team of people to work with in the District.

My personal “Thank You” to each of you who helped in any way with the spring convention, to the ladies who worked many hours, and to the men who are not officially members of our chorus. Your work and dedication is truly appreciated. *Wilbur Strickland*, Spring Convention Local Coordinator,

## 2006 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights:

**Special Chapter Meeting.** May 8th following break.

**Creekside Singout.** June 8th, 6:30 pm

**Riverbend Performance.** June 15th. This event has been cancelled.

**Annual Show.** Two performances August 5th at Notre Dame High School. Title: *Girls, Girls, Girls*.

*(President's Column—continued from page 1)*

business, time for Pole Cats, time for quarteting. Gary has made a real effort to put these kinds of things together to result in a good, solid, enjoyable rehearsal session.

A fourth effort at good communications is the MLT and Board meetings. As you know, the meeting times, dates, and locations have changed recently. It appears that a large majority of the Board and MLT supported these moves. Based on attendance since then, it appears to have been a good move, even though the likelihood of every single member being available for every single meeting is merely wishful thinking. MLT meets on the first Monday of the month at 5 pm. The Board meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, also at 5 pm. We are currently meeting at Wally's on McCallie Avenue. Because rehearsal follows these sessions, we are pushed to get the agenda covered, but it seems to be going okay for now. And, as always we welcome all Chorus members to these meetings.

Lastly, I do trust and hope that I, and all members of the Board, have been open to comments, questions, and ideas. Several members have given me some really good ideas that have already been implemented – as in JW's idea to invite widows of members to attend our Christmas show. Please, please share with us your thoughts to help the Chapter. *Beau Christian*

## Profile of a Member

Paul Blazek was born in Chicago, Illinois October 11, 1953. He lived in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Chicago again until 1965, moving to Nashville and then to Chattanooga in 1977.

He says his most interesting job was as fireman and engineer on live steam locomotives at Opryland theme park in Nashville at the age of 18 (also, they hired six females for every male in the park!)

Paul is currently Data Base Administrator/Software Architect at towXchange, Inc

## CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 2, No 1  
First Quarter 2006

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

Editor: Steve Wixson, wixson@chattanooga.net

( www.towxchange.net.)

His wife is Lindy, and their children are Mary Kathryn (28), Melissa (25), Megan (23), Matt (21).

Paul joined the Nashville chapter in February 1976 and sang in his first barbershop contest at the Cow Palace in San Francisco International in July '76. He competed with Nashville at '77 Philadelphia International and '78 Cincinnati International.

He has been a member of several quartets: Round Mound of Sound (Nashville), Backstage, Stage II, and Four Guys (Chattanooga)

Paul attended Harmony College in 1979, 80, 81, 82 with his quartet—the only quartet to "graduate" from Harmony College. He holds one of only four B.S. degrees ever conferred (Bachelor of Song), was front row at Harmony College in 1983 when Dave Stevens made the video "What Are We Trying To Preserve," attended first Director's College in 1990, and many Society-sponsored schools over the years.

He was Director of Tullahoma, TN chapter in 1984-85, assistant director of the Chattanooga chapter in 1985-86, and director of the Chattanooga chapter since 1986 (with a little time off)

Paul has been a private pilot since 1983. He likes long walks on the beach and Labrador puppies...

## Paul Blazek—2006 BOTY

In January of 2005, the method of selecting the BOTY (Barbershopper Of The Year, pronounced - bowtie) for the year 2004 was reviewed and revised. The new scoring method did not select a recipient. Several meetings of former BOTY members revised the criteria again and because of the delay, the Board decided that there would be no 2004 BOTY. The new scoring system includes points for Chorus activities such as offices held; attendance at meetings, contests, and singouts; Chairman of shows, Valentines, etc.; recruiting new members; non-BOTY member incentive; registered quartet member; and other special activities. Having won a BOTY, a winner is now ineligible for the three years

*(Continued on page 3)*

following. This is to allow others to win, not necessarily the same persons often winning. Using this newly revised scoring system, all members were scored by the BOTY selection committee consisting of former BOTY winners and others selected by the President. The highest scorer would be the 2005 BOTY winner.

The winner for year 2005 was Paul Blazek. This was his first BOTY award, and it was a complete shock to him to receive it. He received points for being the Director of the Chorus, his attendance at meetings and sing outs, he recruited a new member, he is not a former BOTY winner, he is a registered quartet member, and his involvement in other special activities. He was presented with a plaque by the Secretary during a meeting of the Chorus on February 20. Other recent winners were: 2004 - none, 2003 - L. Owens, 2002 - W. Strickland, 2001 -

## Earle Fraser Obituary

" Those Heavenly Bells Are Breaking Up That Old Gang Of Mine "

I paraphrase that old song, inasmuch in my time with the chorus, there went John Lumpkin, the Lamar's Smith and Green., along with Glenn Dabbs, Forrest Bugher, Jack Moore and Lloyd Gimber.

Sadly on March 9th., Earle Robert Fraser, the "Old Mapmaker", charted our final route, filling a void on the risers at that Heavenly scene, where we all hope to meet and sing again.

All who knew, did not need to be reminded by the pastor's words, the love in his heart for Ev, and their sixty-two years of marriage, which shone like a beacon for all to replicate. The love, largess and amicability they shared with those who knew them was boundless. They were there for you when there was a need .

We hazed him on the accuracy of his maps, and his disaffection for singing " Alexander's Ragtime Band".

"CHEEZ !" he would exclaim " They're trying to kill the lead's."

I called them the "Odd Couple" for the constant banter he and Forrest displayed on any subject.

The dazzling performance he gave as the Irish accent police inspector in "Radio."

What a joy and privilege to share our hobby together.... Thank you Earle.

Well old buddy, say Hi to the guys and our love to Ev. Save that spot next to you on those risers.

" Sing a new song to the Lord, for He has done wonderful deeds." Psalm 98:1 Pat Crowe

## Let's Talk Craft Vowel Matching

*The following article was written by Tom Raburn and appeared in the Dallas, Texas chapter's Big D Bulletin, September 1998. There is nothing new here but it is worth your time reading it and taking it to heart so we can move on to bigger and better performances. Get the eye-dee-ah?*

Question: When does  $2 + 2 = 5$ ?

Answer: When **barbershop** harmony is sung correctly. That is by creating harmonic overtones and "expanded sound." One of the most important factors in the achievement of choral blend and expanded sound is unity of vowel sounds. **Vowels** are what we sing and sustain, separated by consonants to make words. When we match vowel sounds, we create like harmonics and the sound expands in intensity through reinforcement. In singing, **vowels** are created through the natural resonance of the human vocal tract. The tongue, lips and jaw are used to fashion the resonators into their vowel shapes.

Some basic rules to follow when forming vowel sounds are:

When producing all vowel sounds, the tip of the tongue should be placed gently on the lower gum ridge, with the tip barely touching the base of the lower teeth. This helps keep the throat open so the vocal chords can vibrate naturally through the resonators (mouth, throat, and sinus cavities). The jaw should be allowed to relax naturally with a swinging down and back motion. The lips should leave the teeth uncovered. Although the mouth must be open wide, it is not how wide it is open but the shape that is most important.

Every vowel can be sung with one of three mouth shapes: round (example—"oh"), square (example—"ih" as in sit) and oblong (example—"ah" as in pop). Refinements to form each specific vowel sound are made by the degree to which the tongue is arched in the mouth, and the degree to which the jaw is dropped. For instance, both the "oh" sound and the "oo" (as in moon) sound are made with the round mouth shape, but the "oh" sound is made with the mouth as open as possible while the "oo" sound is made with the smallest, most rounded shape.

As we sing the songs in our repertoire, keep in mind the basic mechanics of producing vowel sounds and think about the target vowel sound for each word in the song. Properly matched **vowels** can enable our chorus of 20-something men to "fill the hall" and create the expanded sound that makes **barbershop** harmony so much fun to sing and hear.

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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 2, No 2, Second Quarter 2006



Photograph of Dave Reynolds and sister Rosemary at his going away party. Not shown are Paul Blazek, Jay Correll, Fred Jesse, Tom Keegan, and Barry Oliver. Photograph by John Lewis, Dave's brother-in-law.

## Dave Reynolds—Mr. Baritone

The Choo Choo Chorus said goodbye to long term member Dave Reynolds who recently relocated from Chattanooga to Baton Rouge, LA. Dave joined the chorus in 1972 and has been an active member ever since. On two different occasions, he was elected Chapter President, won "Barbershopper of the Year" and for many years was Chapter Secretary and Historian. Dave was an excellent baritone and sang with a number of quartets such as *Backstage*, *Four Guys*, *Pals of Mine*, *Choo-Choo City Chord Committee* and others. In recent years he fell victim to Parkinson's Disease and was finally forced to move to an Assisted Living Facility in Baton Rouge. There he will be close to his large family, consisting of 7 brothers and sisters. So long Dave—we will miss you. *Tom Keegan*.

[Editor's note. At the going away party held at the Life Care Center of Red Bank, Barry Owen presented Dave a framed photograph of Dave singing in the Racketunes Quartet. A copy of that photograph and one taken during the party are on Page 3.]

(Continued on page 2)

## Dave Remembers

Dave said he joined the Chattanooga Chapter in 1972 after he was invited by the chorus director who knew his church choir director. He enjoyed singing and was immediately hooked by barbershop.

In 34 years, he has seen the ebb and flow of chapter membership with high of 62 in 1963 and a low of 10 in 1970. In 1970, the chapter president offered to resign his post if the previous officers would continue in office.

He remembers sending out invitations to known barbershoppers and inviting Knoxville and Nashville to come and sing with us. "We got a quartet out of Knoxville and a chorus of 40 men, who came in a bus, out of Nashville. The chapter doubled its membership."

His most memorable and exciting event was when the chapter performed with the Chattanooga Symphony. They sang a Cohen medley, God Bless America and Battle Hymn of the Republic. The chorus sang a group of songs by ourselves. Dave said, "If we ever get the opportunity again, and since it's

(Continued on page 2)

*Dave Reynolds—continued from page 1)*

Barry said, "The quartet was informally called the Racketoons. We played doubles tennis, then sang after at the tennis courts. Pictured is David Reynolds-baritone, David Collins-bass, Tom Keegan-lead, and Barry Owens-tenor. The photo, as I recall was taken in Huntsville, Alabama at the combined show with Chattanooga, Huntsville, and Nashville choruses. It was taken in the early '90s. However, judging from the name tag on Tom's shirt, it may have been taken at a contest in Huntsville around that same time."

*(Dave Remembers—Continued from page 1)*

been such a long time, we could sing the same program."

Dave's quartet, *Backstage*, came in 4th in the Dixie Competition. This quartet consisted of Dan Bruns, Dan Mills, Paul Blazek, and Dave. Among his most humorous memories was when this quartet performed in tights. They had to get their weight down and went on a diet for about a month and all, including Dan and Paul, had a tough time. They were preparing to go on stage when all of a sudden Dave heard a noise coming from his left—riiiiip. Paul's tights had ripped open. You could see through the tights, so they had agreed to go on in ladies underwear. Anyway they pinned his tights together and completed the show.

Dave also remembers the chapter renting the Southern Bell river boat for a big party.

When I asked him what he the chorus could do to improve, he replied, "when you are on the risers, practice as if you were performing. Sing it as if you are performing because practice makes perfect."

## Chapter Vision Statement

Vision Statement - The Chattanooga Chapter of the S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. is a large, vibrant group of male singers that enjoys learning, fine tuning, and performing the craft of singing in the barbershop style. Barbershop music bonds each member fraternally, and that strengthened by the mutual respect and support each man has for the others. Each member takes great pride in his ability, and his contributions to the Chorus, the Society, and the community. Furthermore, the Chorus is well respected within the community, the Dixie District, and the Society, because of its high quality of performance, very active singing schedule, and support of local and national educational and charitable organizations. [This was adopted in 1997 and published in the June 1997 monthly newsletter—The Blender. *Fred Jesse.*]

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 2, No 2  
Second Quarter 2006

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

Editor: Steve Wixson, wixson@chattanooga.net

## Editorial

This is my first Editorial and it is in response to Dave Reynolds leaving the Chattanooga area. Our chapter is changing with the loss due to relocation and death of several long time members. These include Forest Bugher, Earl Fraser, charter member Lloyd Gimber, Lamar Green, Bob Stansbury, and now Dave Reynolds. Each of these had a wealth of barbershop experience that is difficult to replace. It is a challenge to all of us to learn our craft well, but particularly to newer members like myself.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.) The recipients for the first and second quarters were Beau Christian, Wilbur Strickland, Lamar Owen, Steve Wixson, JW Kirk, Daniel Randolph, Chuck Wilson, Dave Rack, Tom Keegan, Daniel Randolph, Michael Prentice, Sam Jones, Gary Fisher, Frank Delaney, Oliver Jenkins and a few others.

## Dave is remembered

My acquaintance with Dave was only as section mate, but I grew to enjoy and admire him as much as anyone in the Chorus. Not only would he doggedly attend rehearsals and sing outs, overcoming adversity to do it beyond, I think, what most of us would endure, but also his title 'Mr. Baritone' was well earned. Many times as I was beginning in the Chorus, Dave would lean in toward me, help me get onto a portion of a song - and it seemed he knew them all. His voice seemed to blend in with the section as well as the entire Chorus and I learned from that as well. I miss him in our section and our Chorus and I try not to think too much of Dave's illness because, if I do, something down inside of me gets very angry and stays that way for a long time - probably the last thing he would want from anyone. *Beau Christian*





Dave Reynolds singing in the Racketunes Quartet with Dave Collins, Tom Keegan and Barry Owen, Early 1980 photograph.



Dave Reynolds last quartet performance in Chattanooga singing at his going away party with Paul, Hobby and Fred.

## Request from our Historian

In the anticipated remodeling of the meeting place, a location is being planned for storage of the chapter archives. I have material that David Reynolds has kept for many years. I have sorted through a good share of it and hope to organize it for easy info retrieval if needed. However, if while I am doing this, you have any chapter history you would donate to the archives, I would appreciate having it now to include. This would include show programs and scripts ( I have most of them); contest score sheets; video and audio tapes; newspaper articles, ads, and pictures; photos; newsletters, Blenders, and Rebel Rousers; Board and Music Team minutes; Harmonizers; barbershop related books and articles. I need barbershop music books, sheet music, and tags for a file I would like to start of one copy of all the sheet music we have, and any other perhaps out of print music to be kept for reference purposes. Check your closets, file drawers, shelves, boxes, etc., for stuff to be saved. I would most appreciate it. Many thanks. *Fred Jesse*

## Did You Know...

That Beau Christian designs, builds and flies radio controlled airplanes.

That Lebron Brock used to raise and train horses. The most noteworthy thing was to export a quarter horse to Holland that won a national championship.

That in 1976 Steve Grubb was Uncle Sam in his high school chorus.

That Chuck Wilson collects toy Volkswagens now with 250 to 300 pieces.

That Steve Wixson was a high school and college photographer and is a pack rat saving all negatives. He is thinking about turning them into a book.

## Frank Delaney WWII Video

It was recently my pleasure and honor to view Frank Delaney's video record of his WWII experiences. This was a part of the project conducted, I believe, by the Library of Congress. WRCB TV conducted the interviews in this area and our brother, Frank, was one of their participants.

I must confess, when Frank told me the DVD was about 90 minutes long, I was a little apprehensive - I thought it might not hold my interest for that long a time. I couldn't have been more wrong. Frank's exploits in the Navy from enlistment in Chattanooga to "boot camp" and on to the South Pacific, were riveting, humorous, exciting and inspiring. Frank was a mechanic on several naval aircraft; he saw action throughout the Pacific theater and eventually ended his storied military career working on what would come to be the United States space program. He participated in taking apart, studying and launching German rockets on the west coast.

Let me urge you to borrow the DVD from Frank and see for yourself. I'm sure you will enjoy the time spent as much as I did... and take an opportunity to say "Thanks" to Frank for his part in the preservation of our freedoms! *Johnny Jackson* (LTC USAR retired)

## Annual Show Preview

Our annual show is *Girls, Girls, Girls* and will be held August 5th in the Notre Dame High School Auditorium. There will be two performances at 2:30 and 7:00 pm. The show Co-Chairmen are Roger Coffman and Sam Jones. Each song includes the name of a girl and we have purchased over \$1000 of music and learning CDs. Contact any member for tickets. Co-ordinate your ad sales with Frank Delaney. *Roger Coffman*

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Section Leaders	Tenor—Fred Jesse	706-375-5935	tenorguytoo@comcast.net
	Lead (admin)—Tom Keegan	423-326-3631	keeganf@bellsouth.net
	Lead (music)—Johnny Jackson	423-892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
	Baritone—Chuck Wilson	423-624-8635	chukmisa@voy.net
	Bass (admin)—JN Howard	423-837-6741	birder3@earthlink.net
	Bass (music)—Wilbur Strickland	706-866-2567	strick@vol.com

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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 2, No 3, Third Quarter 2006



## Annual Show—Girls, Girls, Girls

Our 2006 annual show was a tribute to the women in our lives. All of the songs carried the name of a girl such as Susie, Sally, Lulu, Rose, and Kathleen. Old and new chapter quartets continued the theme and included Classic Harmony, Rock City 4, ChattanoogaGuys, Mason-Dixon Four, Express Males, and Scenic City Sound. Fred Jesse's daughter, Linda Touns, dressed as a "flapper girl," kept the song posters current while flirting with the chorus and running away from Pat Crowe dressed as Harpo Marx. Michael Prentice, Jerry Bradwell, Steve Grubb and Woody Hobert dressed as a family in outrageous costume and kept popping up as the chorus sang *I Never See Maggie Alone*. There was even an extra afternoon performance so that more of our elderly friends could attend.

It was definitely not the great talents and organizational abilities of the show chairmen, Sam Jones

and myself, that made this year's show successful. Many were willing to work hard in order to make our annual show come together in a really fine way., and many went above and beyond the call of duty to make it all happen.

Steve Wixson led a crew of creative and artistic folks who constructed a beautiful set. Melissa Wilson, Fred Jesse, Tom Keegan, Frank Delaney, Michael Cyr, Dave Rack, Pete Snyder, and W. C. Strickland donated their time and efforts to this task. Melissa Wilson also served as the stage director and insured that everything in the show was done in a timely fashion.

Steve Grubb secured us some good publicity in the newspaper and on the radio. Pete Jones made sure that the risers and the set were transported to

(Continued on page 2)

*(Christmas Show—continued from page 1)*

Notre Dame. Lamar Owens insured that Thom Benson from Channel 3 was on hand to emcee the evening show. James Coulter, a former chorus member who had moved away, was willing to come back to be the emcee at the matinee.

J. W. Kirk got the tickets printed and distributed to each member for selling to family and friends. Some of our newest members put others of us to shame in taking this assignment seriously and getting the job done in an excellent way.

Gary Fisher stepped up and did a bang up job in writing the script for the show. Barry Owens did his usual professional job of producing and printing the show programs.

Possibly the one who out worked us all was Frank Delaney, the program ad chairman. He really takes his responsibility seriously. When he encouraged the chorus members each week to get ads sold, he was not asking us to do something that he was not already tirelessly and enthusiastically doing himself. The ads for the program may have generated as much income as the ticket sales.

The Choo Choo Belles led by Mary Strickland made sure that all of us had plenty of good food to eat when dinner was served between the two shows. It was a fantastic spread.

Last but definitely not the least among us is our tireless director, Paul Blazek. He pleaded and prodded us all to practice and to perform a fun group of songs in such a way that really seemed to please those who came to the performances. Way to go, Paul!

Thanks to everyone for your part in making "Girls, Girls, Girls," a show of which a group of guys could be proud. *Roger Coffman*

## 2006 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: Christmas Show, December 2nd, Christmas Party, December 9th, Dixie Spring Convention, March 23-25, 2007, Knoxville.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.) The recipients were Beau Christian, Olivier Jenkins, Tom Keegan, Pete Jones, Frank Delaney, Paul Blazek, Barry Owens, Pete Jones, Dave Rack and Fred Jesse.

## CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 2, No 3  
Third Quarter 2006

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

Editor: Steve Wixson, [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net)

## Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus To Sing Again

The Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus will begin rehearsals on October 9th in preparation for the Annual Christmas Show. This is a short term opportunity for men to sing in a large male chorus without having to join the Choo Choo Chorus.

This year the show will be held on December 2nd in Chattanooga State Technical Community College's C.C. Bones Auditorium.

## Profile of a Member Steve Grubb

Steve Grubb has been a member of the Choo Choo Chorus for 18 years. He served the chapter as Board Member at Large, Program VP (2 stints), President (2 stints) and Publicity VP. He sung Singing Valentine's with three quartets since the chapter began that activity. In 1997, he spearheaded the arrangements when the chorus went to London with Youth Music of the World to perform in that worldwide endeavor.

He has been active in singing all his life singing in chorus throughout grade school, junior and senior high. He sang in a barbershop quartet during his high school days. He performed the role of Uncle Sam during his senior year (1976) for his chorus. He was a member of A Cappella Singers for 2 years while at Freed-Hardeman University. For most of his life he has led singing for his church worship services.

Steve is a single man with only a dachshund to care for. He has served as a nurse for almost twenty years, and is currently the Nursing Director for Martin-Boyd Christian Home.

## Fall Dixie Convention

The chapter was again host to the Dixie District Fall Convention with Wilbur Strickland again serving as Convention Coordinator. Much work! Much praise and thanks from both the Distract and individual barbershoppers. And thanks from Wilbur and his wife Mary to all of the people who did the work.

## Board Approves Fixing Up Chapter Rooms

Our Chapter rooms at All Saints Academy are great, but are in need of fixing up. Lebron Brock and Gary Fisher worked up a refinishing plan along with its costs. The plan includes fixing the ceiling, painting the walls and refinishing the floors. The Board approved the first phase to fix up the ceiling. Work will begin soon.

Thanks to Clyde Rogers who upgraded the air conditioner controls and added duct controls to selectively increase air flow to either practice room.

## Chapter Mission Statement

The mission of the Chattanooga Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Singing in America [now the Barber-shop Harmony Society] is to promote and encourage the joy of barbershop harmony by:

- Preserving the craft and style of barbershop music
- Encouraging formation and developments of barbershop quartets.
- Educating young people, as well as older ones, in the enjoyment of close vocal harmony
- Singing an exciting and varied repertoire
- Performing for the public at charitable, religious, educational, and paid engagements
- Promoting unity and fellowship through musical, social, and Society activities
- Growing steadily in membership by attracting enthusiastic male singers of all ages.
- Instilling individual commitment to develop musical and singing skills through training, motivation, mentoring, and participation
- Improving singing quality as measured by competition scores.

## New Members

Welcome to new members Michael Cyr (lead), Darryl Hubbard (bass), Oliver Jenkins (lead), Mi-

chael Prentice (tenor), Ed Thornton (a returning bass), and Hobert Woody (bass).

## Dave Collins on Pitch

At the recent Dixie Convention, we, the leads in particular, were criticized by the judges for losing pitch. I overheard Dave talking about this in the parking lot after one of our meetings and I asked him to formalize it.

"The best way to practice staying on pitch while singing is to identify the pitch or "do" note from the key signature, visually identify and highlight each 'do' note in the notes that make-up your singing part. Sound the "pitch note" every time you reach a highlighted note to see how close to pitch you are. If you change "keys" during a song, use the new 'do' note. The easiest way to incorporate correct pitch in your singing is to hear the pitch without trying to sing the pitch. Anytime, in any place in the song, stop and from your memory, bring up the pitch note. It's hard at first but the more you try the better you get. Always take and internalize the pitch from a pipe, or a piano, and never, never, from another person. It is like the old game of telling a secret from one person to another to another, to another. It never has the same meaning or pitch as when it started out. End of Preaching. *Dave Collins*

## A Note from our Prez

While away visiting my daughter and grandson in Virginia last week, I was trying, not very successfully, to access my email, see if there was any 'news' from the Chorus. There was, and I attempted to respond to some emails and found that I couldn't get the emails to go out from Virginia.

While doing all that, I found myself humming 'Mary Lou' and other selections. I began to ponder the impact of the Chorus on my life and decided that it was considerable. I do spend some time thinking about the Chorus, trying to act like a President, trying to help the Chorus.

But that's not really what it's about. What it is about is after rehearsal, three weeks ago, Paul, Oliver, me - and I forget who was doing tenor - huddled together singing Mary Lou at the top of our lungs and enjoying something really special that only barbershoppers understand. I am reminded of the old adage, 'For those who have experienced it, no explanation is needed. For those who have not experienced it, no explanation is possible.' The Chorus really is something special for all who participate. *Beau Christian*

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Officers (2006)**

President	Beau Christian	837-0263	wbc37380@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
Secretary	Fred Jesse	375-5935	tenorguytoo@comcast.net
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Music VP	Roger Coffman	718-0343	rogerandmilbrey@bellsouth.net
Chapter Dev VP	Steve Wixson	886-1744	wixson@chattanooga.net
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Board Member	Lebron Brock	903-0005	lbrock2020@yahoo.com
Director	Paul Blazek	664-1304	pjblazek@bellsouth.net
Associate Director	Chuck Wilson	624-8635	chukmisa@voy.net

**Website:** choochoochorus.org

**Telephone:** 423-265-7392

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown below.

**Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403**



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 2, No 4, Fourth Quarter 2006



Songs of Christmas Show at Chattanooga State Technical Community College. Photograph by Mrs. Lucien ?

## Songs of Christmas Show

CC Bond Auditorium at Chattanooga State Technical Community College was the setting for our 2006 Christmas Show titled *Songs of Christmas*. We were joined by a smaller than usual Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus, but they joined us for all songs. As always, we hope to get a few new members from these men who were all good singers.

In agreement to donate proceeds to a charity, the chapter gave \$500.00 to the local Toys for Tots drive, sponsored by the U S Marines. The marines were on hand for the Creekside sing out where they were presented with their check .

Many thanks to those who helped to make the show a success: Paul Blazek-Director, Chuck Wilson-Associate director, Gary Fisher- script, Marilyn Fisher-Stage Manager, Bob Hobgood-lighting and sound, Barry and Nancy Owens-Program, Choo Choo Belles-ticket sales, all chorus members, all quartet members and guests. And, of course, the Audience. *Pete Jones*, Show Chairman

## Busy December for Sing Outs

December 2006 was one of the busiest months in recent years for sing outs (see photos on Page 4.) On Sunday following our Christmas Show we sang at

(Continued on page 2)



President Beau Christian presents a check with Christmas Show proceeds to Gunnery Sergeant Jason Foster, Marine Corp Reserve

(December Sing outs—continued from page 1)

the Toys for Tot festival in Lookout Valley. The Marines were there collecting toys, and there were other performers. It was a bit chilly, but read the article by Pat Crowe on Page 3 about singing in the really cold.

This was followed by Martin Boyd Retirement Home where we sang for a Christmas party with decorations and food.

The trip to Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church was a bit different. We sang songs for evening worship service, and with a dinner provided by the church, continued with a secular program in their Life Center.

Our trips to Alexian Village and Creekside Retirement Home were similar to previous years. Alexian now has closed circuit television to all rooms, so no one knows how many people we entertained. At Creekside, we presented a check with the net proceed from the Christmas Show to Toys For Tots representative, Gunnery Sergeant Jason Foster, Marine Corps Reserve.

Our last gig was to the South Pittsburg Senior Center. This might be the first sing out in that city where Beau Christian and JN Howard live.

As the photographs on Pages 1 and 4 testify, there were a variety of venues and we shared the Christ-

## Profile of a Member

Johnny Jackson, LTC, EN, USAR (Retired), first attended one of the annual shows of the Choo Choo Chorus in 1986 at the invitation Dale Phillips, a chorus member and salesman who called on him at his work. The show was at the Tivoli Theatre and he was hooked by the second song. He attended the next meeting of the chorus at the rehearsal hall behind the Methodist Church on North Moore Road and has been enjoying the hobby ever since.

Johnny's earliest training in music was at the age of 12 at church learning how to lead a cappella singing with shaped notes and a pitch pipe or tuning fork. The text was *The SDN Theory of Music* and was really pretty good at covering the basics of music theory. In Junior High, he joined the band and took up the trombone. He was in the marching band and concert band for four years and ended as first chair, first trombone.

Johnny was born in McMinnville, TN on March 18, 1948. He served 28 years (active and reserve) in the US Army, Corps of Engineers, retiring at the rank of LTC. He served on active duty during the Viet Nam War and the first Gulf War. He and his wife, Sally, have two boys, Paul and Tip who both live in Chattanooga.

## CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 2, No 4  
Fourth Quarter 2006

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barber-shop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown on Page 4

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**Telephone:** 423-265-7392

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## 2007 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: January 12-13, COTS, January 20, Board/MLT Retreat, March 23-25, Dixie Spring Convention, Knoxville, TN, May 5, Annual Show 'Radio,' July 1-8, International Convention, Denver, CO.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.) The recipients were Fred Jesse, Mary Strickland for work during Dixie Convention, Steve Wixson, Bill Slack, Johnny Jackson (who loved it and kept it for 2 weeks), Beau Christian, Clyde Rogers who hilariously passed it on (cut in five pieces it seemed) to Chuck Wilson, Bill Slack, Paul Blazek, Tom Keegan, and Wilbur Strickland, who collectively passed it on to Pete Jones for chairing the Christmas show, Steve Wixson, and Ron Satterfield.

## Christmas Party

54 members and their families celebrated Christmas together at Steve and Janet Wixson's house. The food and fellowship were great. Tom Keegan installed officers for 2007. Steve Wixson, who left the Gandy Award home on Monday, passed it to Ron Satterfield. The chorus sang a few Christmas songs, and the Mason-Dixon and Scenic City Sound quartets sang a few more. Clyde Rogers had this thing-a-ma-jig gift that he and the bass section hilariously gave to Wilbur Strickland. We close by singing *Keep the Whole World Singing*. It must have been a good party as it lasted over three and a half hours.

## Pat Crowe Remembers

Ten years ago the chorus was preparing to go to London, England to be part of the 1997 London Parade Music Festival. We cruised through the bone chilling windy streets of London atop a double-decker bus singing Chattanooga Choo Choo.

The low temperatures were record setting. the coldest winter in fifty years. Our wives took hotel blankets to keep warm at the parade site.

The following current members made the trip; Steve Grubb, Sam Jones, Paul Blazek, Bill Slack, Fred Jesse, Tom Keegan, Niles Fowler, Bernard Peek, Dave Reynolds, Barry Owens, Chuck Wilson and me. *Pat Crowe*

## President's Column

As my first year as President closes, I've been doing a lot of thinking about the Chorus, next year, hopes and dreams, needs and promises. I keep recalling a conversation I had with a visitor a few weeks ago. This was Pat - can't think of his last name right now - from Norfolk, VA. Anyway, he called the next morning following his visit to thank us for our hospitality.

He said, 'Looks like your guys have a lot of fun and fellowship.' 'Yeah, we do', I said. 'But we could do better in competition.'

Pat said, 'I've been barbershopping for over 30 years and my chorus is highly competitive and scores pretty well usually. But, after all these years, I'm not so sure but what having more fun and fellowship would have been better than concentrating so much on competing.'

He makes a good point. Seems to me we could do

both, but if I had to choose, I wouldn't trade anything for the fellowship we enjoy. So - on to 2007 and my wish for you all is peace, and love, and harmony.

*Beau Christian*

## Director's Column

I'm pleased as we end 2006 - we've had a busy year. Girls, Girls, Girls! was a good show (although we could have had a bigger audience) and our Christmas show was, according to comments I heard, one of the best we've done lately. We did a good number of performances during the year, especially in the last month, and, we showed improvement over previous contests and implemented a new assessment procedure to help us improve our performance in future contests.

2007 will see us with some new members and the chance for even more, a wonderful show in May (Remember Radio is always a hit), two brand new songs for the contest cycle (Sweet Georgia Brown and Georgia On My Mind) and plenty of opportunity. Have a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year - we'll hit the ground running on 1/8/2007!

*Paul Blazek*

## Officers Installed for 2007

The officers shown below were installed at the Christmas party. Most of the officers and Board members return from 2006. Lebron Brock takes over as Chapter Development VP and Steve Wixson takes over as Bulletin Editor. Wilbur Strickland returns as a Board Member after a short layoff. These officers are all experienced and we expect a good year of leadership from them. The Chapter is in good hands.

### Officers for 2007 (installed at the Christmas Party)

President	Beau Christian	837-0263	wbc37380@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
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Board Member	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com
Director	Paul Blazek	664-1304	pjblazek@bellsouth.net
Associate Director	Chuck Wilson	624-8635	chukmisa@voy.net



Toys for Tot's Festival. The barbershop in the background is owned by member Clarence Wall. .Photograph by Linda Toups.



Martin Boyd Retirement Home. Look at that food spread.  
Photograph by Sandra Johnston



Mt Pisgah Baptist Church. Photograph by Steve Wixson



Creeside Nursing Home. Photograph by Steve Wixson

**Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403**



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 3, No 1, First Quarter 2007



The Official Choo Choo Chorus photograph from the 2007 Spring Dixie Convention in Knoxville, Tennessee.

## The Spring Dixie Convention

The Spring Convention of the Dixie District of the Barbershop Harmony Society was one of the most enjoyable in my short career as a barbershopper. The Fall convention has been less enjoyable because in recently years we have been the host, and our work commitments interfere with listening and singing.

This year, 22 members went to Knoxville to compete in the chorus competition. We worked hard to improve our singing and installed an assessment procedure to identify weaknesses and improve our performance. We had two extra rehearsals and were feeling good about ourselves.

Saturday morning, Clyde Rogers and I car pooled to Knoxville and we are not good together in a car. After a big breakfast at Wally's on Old Ringgold Road and I-75, we hit the road. When we arrived in Knoxville, we found the normal exit to the Marriot and Convention Center was closed and a detour directed us to the next exit. After a couple of turns, I

convinced Clyde that a turn was required and it wasn't long before we were way off course. Thanks to a couple of gentlemen, we finally made it to the hotel.

As guys showed up in Paul's hotel room to dress and make up, it seemed to me that we had a more relaxed and confident air than in recent years. We gathered in the lobby, entered the competition matrix by assembling for the group photograph shown above. Then off to the warm up room for last minute run through of our two contest songs, *Sweet Georgia Brown* and *Georgia on My Mind*.

It was there most of us learned that the Nashville chorus was singing just before us and were singing the same two songs and in the same order. It's not unusual for the same song to be performed more than once in a competition, but for a chapter to pick the same two songs of another chapter is almost unheard of. Anyway, Paul warned us to be prepared for a reaction from the audience.

We bussed to the convention center, waited our turn and sang our competition package. I must report

(Continued on page 2)

(Spring Dixie Convention—continued from page 1)

that the Nashville chorus outscored us, but most members that I've talked to felt good about our performance. The current plan is to sing the same two songs at the Fall convention and this will give us the opportunity to improve our singing and add more to presentation. With our international headquarters moving to Nashville and some of the staff joining the Nashville chapter, they are going to be tough to beat.

After the chorus competition was over, twenty members gathered at Calhoun's Restaurant for a hearty dinner (most of us had not eaten since breakfast.) The car stereo played the *Radio Days* annual show learning CD, and the ride to the restaurant was full of barbershop singing. With Steve Grubb, chairman of the annual show, at the table, the talk soon turned to old time radio and people remembering their favorite old shows, like *The Great Gildersleeve*, and the actors who played key parts. Gary Fisher was the only one to remember that Harold Peary played the lead roll in that show. A long list was made of favorites and we will try and get clips to play before and during our annual show. After we had eaten, we sang a couple of songs for the other restaurant customers.

The Saturday night Quartet Finals Competition and Show of Champions was the best that I have seen. Two quartets, MaxQ (who competed out of district and were last year's International runner-up) and State Line Grocery qualified for International in Denver. SLG sang outstanding renditions of *Cry Me a River* and the bluegrass song *Blue Moon of Kentucky*. All but two of the remaining quartets sang at almost that level (at least to my ear.)

The Show of Champions showcased MaxQ, SLG and the winners of the Buffalo Bill Era Quartet Contest held at the mid-winter convention. We were entertained by, last year's Dixie chorus champions, the Rocky Mount Chorus, and this year's winner, the Memphis Cotton Boll Chorus. The evening concluded with the Memphis Chorus leading everyone in *Keep the Whole World Singing*. Wow! What an evening.

Then back to the Marriott for the afterglow. New member, Art Southerlin, was about to head to his hotel room when we convinced him to stay for at least a few minutes. After a trip to a hospitality room that was not rocking, we found Bill Slack who, of course, knew where the good food was (room 902.) Clyde, Art, Lebron and Margie Brock and I went there for great food and an intimate short program from MaxQ themselves. Art has been afterglow baptized!

Clyde and I, got only slightly lost driving out of Knoxville, and made it safely back to Chattanooga. I

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 3, No 1  
First Quarter 2007

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went to bed about 3 am, but it took me a while to go to sleep with music still ringing loudly in my head.  
*Steve Wixson*

## 2007 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: May 5, Annual Show 'Radio Days,' July 1-8, International Convention, Denver, September 28-30, Fall Dixie Convention, Chattanooga, TN

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.) The recipients were Benny Malone, Tom Keegan, Gary Fisher, Art Southerlin, Frank Delaney, Steve Wixson, Erby Erwin, Michael Prentice and Paul Blazek.

## Profile of a Member—Fred Jesse

Fred Jesse's musical experience began in grade school with music class and piano lessons that his mother made him do. He did learn to read music there, however. He sang in various choirs: freshman, junior, and senior choirs in high school, and college choir, all the while singing in church choirs and a young men's quartet. He moved to Missouri for new employment in 1971. He was asked, and sang with the local men's chorus in Sedalia, Missouri for two years.

He had a job move to the Kansas City area where he did not sing for several years. His wife purchased tickets to the Heart of America Barbershop Chorus annual show in 1984. The featured quartets were the Dapper Dans and the Rural Route Four (before they were International Champions). They invited men in the audi-

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2)

ence to attend their meetings, and Fred went to the next one. When 80 guys sang to him, "You're As Welcome As The Flowers In May", he was hooked. After a brief audition, he was singing with them in 1985. He was asked to sing with a special VLQ, the Harmony Handful directed by Jim Bagby, and also with a registered quartet, Harmony On Call.

A job change to Georgia got him started with the Choo Choo Chorus in 1989. He has sung with lots of unregistered quartets, and with registered quartets including the Rock City Four and Scenic City Sound. He has competed in district contests with Rock City Four, Just For Kicks, and senior quartets Senior Class, Senior Sound, and Rock City Four. Senior Class won the Dixie District senior contest in 1995 and went to the Winter International in January 1996.

Fred was Barbershopper Of The Year in 1994, and has held office in the Choo Choo Chorus as Music VP and President, and currently is Secretary, apparently for life. He is also a member of the Cleveland Scream Machine Chorus in Cleveland TN. Fred has other music related interests. He is interested in, and has attended several times, the World Championship Old Time Piano Playing Contest. He likes ragtime piano, although he can't play it. Instead he has a real old player piano (1912), and has collected over 2000 piano rolls for it including at least 1500 different tunes. He especially likes piano rolls of the same songs we sing as barbershoppers and note the difference between the piano and the barbershop arrangement. He collects

some old sheet music, old hymn books, and lots of old barbershop music in the form of printed music and old phonograph records. One other unrelated to music hobby, is driving their 1959 Corvette to car shows and cruise-ins.

## BOTY 2006

Fred Jesse is the 2006 Barbershopper Of The Year (BOTY.) Fred received the award at a chapter dinner on April 28 (See photograph on Page 4.)

Fred was selected for the Profile of a Member column in this issue before the award was given. A nice coincidence since it makes it easy to see Fred's contributions that lead to the award.

This BOTY award has been given to chapter men beginning in 1971 and most years thereafter. It is based on a scoring system for chapter activities such as attendance at meetings, sing outs, contests, and shows. Chapter officers, registered and unregistered quartet members, section leaders, committee chairmen, non-BOTY winners, and other notable activities by members, all receive points.

The point scale was revised in 2004 after no one received the required 300 points minimum. Since then, Paul Blazek was given the award for 2005

Winners are ineligible for three years after so that others have a better chance of winning, and an award will be given each year to the man with the most points without regard to a minimum score.

### Officers for 2007

President	Beau Christian	837-0263	wbc37380@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
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## Singing Valentines 2007 Notes and Quotes

Another singing Valentines project is now under our belt. We count this, as in years past, to be a success. The number of deliveries and monetary income might not match previous years, but all deliveries were completed without any major hitches. There were 55 deliveries this year done with 5 quartets. With a little more push on advertisement and more quartets, we could bump that number up next year. Even with a few customers that have not paid, yet our income will be in excess of \$2000.

As for customer satisfaction, we did a good job on that part. Many thanks and good comments on the jobs well done by the quartets. The customers say that what we do is well worth the price and gives memories for a long time to come. It is a win/win situation and we just need to keep up the good work. Thanks to all that were involved in the project. *Pete Jones*, Singing Valentines 2007-Chairman



Paul Blazek receives a Lifetime Membership Certificate from Fred Jesse given by the Chapter for Paul's many years of service. Paul had presented Fred with the Barbershopper of the Year 2006 plaque.

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 3, No 2, Second Quarter 2007



Radio Days Show photograph taken by Melissa Blazek. Sound Man Johnny Jackson on left and KORD jingle quartet on right.

## Radio Day's Annual Show

Maybe the third time is the charm!! Once again, RADIO DAYS has proven to be a successful venture for the Choo Choo Chorus. This was our third time to present the show and it came off very well in every aspect. Revenues from the show should clear \$4,000.00, keeping us viable for another year.

The entertainment at halftime was long, but very well received by the audience. Our own Steve Wixson wowed 'em with his rhythm bones, and the comedians (Steve Plemmons and Rick Hasty) had them smiling throughout their presentations.

As always, the show was stolen by our unparalleled Sound Man, Johnny Jackson. I was extremely pleased to see so many quartets participate in the show and they all did a fine job presenting our craft. Our actors read their lines with aplomb and threw their scripts with great flair, although it was difficult to recognize Jose as his hats and moustaches changed with each appearance.

Your emcee struggled through the updated script provided by Gary Fisher and Paul Blazek.

Speaking of Paul, he did his usual thankless task of preparing the chorus to present this outstanding show.

Our audience enjoyed themselves and barbershop-

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Chorus Had a Busy Spring

The Choo Choo Chorus had a busy Spring schedule. In addition to the Annual Show, we performed for the Grand Reopening of City Hall (see story on Page 3 and photograph on Page 4), the annual Memorial Day events at the Chattanooga National Cemetery (see story on Page 2 and photograph on Page 4), Creekside Nursing Home, Special Olympics Track and Field meet, and finally a big show for the Monteagle Assembly (see story on Page 3.)

You can't fight City Hall, but you can join them. That's exactly what the chorus did on May 19—along with the mayor, local dignitaries, other entertainers and the general public. The chorus joined in the ceremony to celebrate the re-opening of Chattanooga City Hall. The original ceremony, 100 years ago, featured a quartet singing The Star Spangled Banner. This time there were 22 members of the chorus performing in grand style. The mayor and other dignitaries were dressed in period costume from the year 1908.

The building itself had been recently renovated and the public was invited to tour the facility. The chorus was complimented on the performance and received good local publicity.

*(Continued on page 2)*

(Radio Days—Continued from page 1)

ping was done proud, as usual. Many thanks to the chorus and its members for all of their hard work and effort. The Belles once again did their usual fantastic job of supporting and feeding the guys.

Finally, let me thank you personally for allowing me to chair this show. I was very proud to serve in this capacity and thankful for the chance to do so. Looking forward to next year. *Steve Grubb*, Show Chairman

## President's Column

One of the nice things the Rag Tag does both for readers of it and writers for it is that it causes us to look back over the events of the previous quarter(s) and to reflect on our activities.

This year so far we have done our usual programs - singing outs, annual show, competition but also we have taken on some new outings such as singing at the re-opening of City Hall, Memorial Day ceremonies at the Chattanooga National Cemetery and doing a concert at Monteagle Assembly. We have also increased opportunities for fellowship among members and their spouses, and more are planned.

And I'm thinking that in all we do, really we are pursuing two objectives: chord worshipping and fellowship. It just seems to me that these are what barber-shopping is all about and I am proud to be a part of it and to hold (or cling to?) the office of President. *Beau Christian*

## Profile of a Member

In 1963, Tom Keegan had his first barbershop harmony experience singing in a *Music Man* quartet during a play in Pearl River, NY.

Shortly thereafter, he moved to Fairfax, VA where he met a cafeteria manager, who convinced him to attend a meeting of the Fairfax Jubilaires chorus. He was hooked and joined after that first meeting.

Since then, Tom has sung with the Westchester, Golden Chordsman, the Saratoga Racing City Chorus and Chattanooga. He has sung in the International Chorus Competition on three occasions and sung lead with numerous quartets, such as Three O'Clock Four, Cho-Choo City Chord Committee, Harrison Bay Harmonizers and presently the Mason Dixon Four.

Since joining Chattanooga, Tom has been Chapter President, Show Chairman, Assistant Director, and Lead Section Leader. He and Barbara are the parents of 6 children and 13 grandchildren. Tom celebrated his 75th birthday on July 3 and he is currently employed as VP-Sales for Daltonian Flooring in Calhoun, GA.

## CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 3, No 2  
Second Quarter 2007

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barber-shop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown on Page 4

**Website:** [choochoochorus.org](http://choochoochorus.org)

**Telephone:** 423-265-7392

**Editor:** Steve Wixson, [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net)

## 2007 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: May 5, Annual Show, July 1-8, International Convention, Denver, Fall Dixie Convention, September 28-30 (We are hosts again.)

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

Here is the quarterly update on Gandy Dancers (this award is passed from one member to a member of his choice in recognition of service to the chapter.)

Paul Blazek, Dave Rack, Clyde Rogers, Steve Wixson (who then went on vacation for three Mondays), and Brooks Gist

## Busy Spring Continued

**Choo Choo Chorus joins the Boy Scouts.** Not Really! Actually, the chorus participated in a 20 year old tradition of paying tribute to those buried in The Chattanooga National Cemetery. Each year, on Memorial Day weekend, the local Boy Scout Council, Girl Scouts, Veterans Organizations and other individuals placed American Flags on the graves at the cemetery. Hundreds of individuals place, literally, thousands of flags and the numbers keep growing each year.

There were guest speakers and Veteran Honor guards participating in the ceremony. The chorus sang the Star Spangled Banner and God Bless America to an enthusiastic crowd. Such a patriotic activity can be uplifting and emotional at the same time. We hope to have the opportunity to be a part of more of these



events in the future. We received an official Boy Scout patch for participating. PRICELESS!

#### **Choo Choo Chorus attends Sunday School.**

Well, not exactly! Although, the name on the sign said : "Monteagle Sunday School Assembly" and the building we sang in was a church (really a chapel building.) Much to our surprise this was not just "a chapel," it is actually part of a private gated community in Monteagle, Tennessee. It has been there for some 100 plus years. One of those well kept secrets

even though they're not trying to keep it a secret. Beautiful older homes, wooden bridge walkways, quiet peaceful surroundings. The community is permanent home to some 140 residents and a getaway for others. We sang for a very appreciative crowd , young and old. They insisted that we do two encore songs even after an hours' worth of performing. Even though it's a little bit of a drive from Chattanooga up the mountain, we surely will look forward to returning there to perform again. *Pete Jones*



Scenic City Sound quartet singing to an appreciative audience at the Monteagle Assembly sing out at Monteagle, TN

#### **Officers for 2007**

President	Beau Christian	837-0263	wbc37380@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
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Chorus Performs for the Grand Reopening of Chattanooga City Hall.



Chorus performs for Memorial Day activities at Chattanooga National Cemetery. Photograph by Wally Edmondson

**Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403**



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 3, No 3, Third Quarter 2007



Scenic City Sound—From left, Brooks Gist, Wilbur Strickland, Lamar Owen, and Ron Satterfield



Classic Harmony—From left, Barry Owens, Dave Abercrombie, Clarence Wall and Chuck Wilson

## Our Registered Quartets

**Scenic City Sound**—A Barbershop style Quartet. Formed as *Scenic City Sound*, we have been singing together for about eight years. We have performed at many venues throughout the area including appearances on WRCB-TV, WDOD AM, WUTC FM and US101 radio stations promoting our style of music. Our performances have taken us as far away Scottsboro, Alabama. With a repertoire that favors newer barbershop arrangements, western style music and gospel music, we keep busy performing for churches, clubs, retirement communities and many other groups. We have also appeared at Riverbend for the last five years. With a combined total of over forty five years of barbershopping experience, our lighthearted sense of humor brightens every performance. The quartet has benefited from two years attendance at the Dixie Lakeside Harmony Weekend where we were coached by four different coaches. DLHW is a district wide school for quartets and other barbershoppers held over a long weekend at Clemson University. We have also benefited from individual coaching sessions. *Lamar Owens*

**Classic Harmony**—This quartet has been registered since 1993. The group has never had a personnel change, making us the oldest quartet if you consider only current members. We are just too tired to

(Continued on page 2)

## Four-on-the-Floor Quartets

I hope everyone enjoyed our Four-on-the-Floor performance as shown on the photograph on Page 4. It gave us the chance to do something a little different and to provide everyone with a good laugh (although we do that quite often throughout our rehearsals). My thanks to Steve Wixson for his idea of *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* and for providing our uniforms. (With a few more rehearsals I probably could have even gotten all the notes right! My catcher's mask kept falling down on my face making me forget which note was next. Yeah, right!)

I want to give SPECIAL thanks to Fred Jesse for his good nature and stepping up to the plate as a tenor ALMOST every time we do FOTF. (Yeah, he grumbles, but he does it with a smile and I know he secretly enjoys it.) Thanks, Fred! And Michael Prentice, now that you're back, you are Fred's backup.

When I first came to the Chorus over three years ago we very rarely had a quartet sing after the break, but when we did have one I was thoroughly entertained. The first time it was done was by Scenic City Sound and hearing Brook Gist doing "Old Bones". I've been a huge fan of his ever since. Then I was moved to the position of the Exalted Supreme Program Director, filling in some pretty big shoes for Richard Poole (come back, Richard, we miss you!)

(Continued on page 2)

*(Four-on-the-Floor—continued from page 1)*

I wanted to make a big splash so I tried to organize our rehearsals into blocks of time that kept us moving forward...giving Chuck Wilson specific time for warm-ups, doing the Polecat of the Month, keeping on task for the business meetings, staying late for an afterglow, and starting Four-on-the-Floor. It wasn't just that I wanted to be entertained after the break. I saw it as an opportunity for those guys who wanted to sing in a quartet but didn't know how to break into one. I wanted everyone to have a chance to get up there and see what fun it could be to actually sing in a quartet. I had an opportunity to sing in one on Valentine's Day and it was a blast, even if Wilbur Strickland did make me sing to the men who were on the list. (He had a hard time singing *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* to another guy.)

It may take a little courage to get up there and sing in front of your pals, but every single one of them is pulling for you and not the LEAST bit offended if you hit a sour note. So when I ask for volunteers for Four on the Floor, even if you've never sung in a quartet, try it out. You just might like it. *Gary Fisher*

## 2007 Calendar Highlights

Christmas Show, December 1, CTCSS Bond Auditorium (expect a heavy December sing out schedule.)  
Dixie Spring Convention, March 14-15, 2008, Greenville, SC. Annual Show, May 3, 2008. International Convention, June 29 – July 6, 2008, Nashville. The Nashville chapter is the host and they are looking for volunteers to help them. There will be a website soon where you can volunteer. You get free admission.

## Dixie Convention Summary

The Choo Choo Chorus for the seventh time in this decade hosted the Dixie District Convention. Wilbur Strickland assembled another team of good workers and we received many words of praise.

The Chorus worked hard preparing for the competition and it paid off. We tied for 11th with the Big Chicken Chorus and were the second most improved chorus.

We also received the Sheldon Grebe Award for the highest per man contribution to the Harmony Foundation.

## 20 years of Special Olympics

The Chapter recently sang for the Special Olympics Bowling Tournament. Lindy Blazek noted that this was the 20th year that we have done this. Paul Blazek noted at the following meeting, that those Olympians tell others they have their own Barbershop chorus.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 3, No 3  
Third Quarter 2007

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*(Our Registered Quartets—Continued from page 1)*

try to break-in a new person, so we just keep on keeping on.

Clarence Wall, bass, retired as an executive in the hosiery knitting mill business, only to start up a new operation in South Africa a couple years back. He resides on Lookout Mountain with Sally, his wife, who heads up the Classic Harmony Cheerleaders.

Barry Owens, tenor, enjoyed retirement from Combustion Engineering in June of 1994 so much that he began a second career with the Hamilton County School System, teaching sixth grade math, just so he could retire again, which he did in June 2006. He lives in East Brainerd with a beautiful red head, named Nancy. Besides singing, his other hobby is billiards, which he plays every day (almost.) Barry and Nancy enjoy traveling and camping.

Chuck Wilson, baritone, is a student in the Music Department at CSTCC. In addition to singing the most difficult part in the quartet, he is the Associate Director of our chorus. He is married to Melissa and together they are active in the Chattanooga Theatre. Chuck is the Music Director at Northminister Presbyterian Church, indeed a busy man.

Dave Abercrombie, lead, is Producer/Marketing at The Insurity Group. After retiring from The John Hancock Financial Company, he began a second career helping to establish a new insurance company. He performs solo programs of sacred music for churches, senior groups and other civic organizations. He attends First Centenary UMC singing in the sanctuary choir. He and his wife, Mary, live in Collegedale/Ooltewah area. *Dave Abercrombie*

**Rock City 4**—Rock City 4 quartet is registered as an official quartet, and has been since 1988. The membership has varied over the twenty years of its existence. The original quartet was composed of tenor, Steve Donavan; lead, James Coulter; bass, Scott

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Our Registered Quartets—continued from page 2)

McKenzie; and baritone, Sid Kiser. Fred Jesse is only the second tenor for Rock City, having taken that position in 1990. Scott McKenzie was replaced by Ed Durden, who was then replaced by David Collins in 1995. The baritone has changed most frequently. Sid Kiser was replaced by Dowell Kelly, who was replaced by Randy Goff. Benny Malone took Randy's place in 1998. Bill Slack replaced James Coulter also in 1998. Thus, the current membership has sung together almost ten years.

The current members of the quartet are all very family oriented. Fred has been married to Judy for almost fifty years, and Bill has been happily married to Pat for 25 years, out of a total of 37. Dave's long suffering wife is Carol and Benny is lucky to have Gwelda. Fred has two daughters and two grown-up grandchildren. Benny has two grown sons and one grand-daughter. Bill has three children and three adorable grand-daughters. Dave has two sons, and one of them married several weeks ago. The Quartet members come from interesting backgrounds as well. Fred, who lives in Rock Spring, Georgia, was a paratrooper in the Korean War and made three combat jumps before becoming an engineer, most recently at Roper in LaFayette. He is now retired and races motorcycles for a hobby. Benny was a member of the Air Force's Penguin Squad, the elite security troops which are the Air Force's equivalent of the Navy Seals. After active duty, he worked for the

Tennessee Air National Guard for 38 years but is now retired. On a part time basis, he teaches public speaking at Chattanooga State. Dave Collins, a retired TVA engineer, was a world champion kick boxer for the University of Tennessee. He also teaches classes at Chattanooga State on improving your memory. As for Bill, after winning the Pulitzer prize in literature, he became an attorney in LaFayette, Georgia and is the only working quartet member today.

The Quartet members have varied sing histories. All are dual members in the *Chattanooga* and *Cleveland Choruses*. Fred began barbershopping with the *Kansas City Chorus* in 1986, and sang on the International stage with them. He was in a quartet in Kansas City named *Harmony On Call*. Since moving to Chattanooga in 1989, he has sung with two senior quartets, *Senior Class* and *Senior Sounds*. *Senior Class* went to International Seniors competition. He is also a substitute tenor for the Chattanooga quartet *Scenic City Sound*. Dave Collins has also been a member of the *Knoxville Chorus*. His quartet experience is vast, singing with the *Choo Choo City Chord Committee*, the *Volunteer Statesmen*, a Knoxville quartet, *Just for Kicks* in Chattanooga, and several senior quartets. Benny Malone was a member of the *Harrison Bay Harmonizer* quartet, *Just for Kicks* quartet, and with Fred, *Senior Class*. While Benny is an awesome baritone he can also sing tenor which makes him bisectonal. Bill Slack, while extremely talented and much

(Continued on page 4)

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Rock City 4—From left, Benny Malone, Dave Collins, Bill Slack and Fred Jesse

in demand, has only sung with the *Rock City* quartet.

Over the years, Rock City has not been a competition quartet, by theirs and the judges choice. They have sung on stage in shows in Augusta, Georgia, Cleveland, Tennessee, Nashville, Tennessee, and of course, Chattanooga. Besides Valentines and Christmas performances, they have sung at funerals, weddings, church services, class reunions, business meetings, birthday parties, church meetings, family gatherings, bar mitzvahs, seances, bridge openings, revivals

Chattanooga Chapter  
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Four-on-the-Floor quartet calling themselves the Four Outs performing *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* on July 30, 2007. From left, Gary Fisher, catcher; Johnny Jackson, Ump; Steve Wixson, batter; and Fred Jesse, pitcher. Photograph by Wally Edmondson

and witch burnings.

All four members enjoy singing with a chorus, but feel much more fulfilled while singing in a good, fun quartet. *Bill Slack*

**Four Grand** This is a new quartet with Ron Satterfield, tenor; Art Southerlin lead; Johnny Jackson, baritone and Wilbur Strickland, bass. More on this quartet in the next issue.



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 3, No 4, Fourth Quarter 2007



Choo Choo Chorus Christmas Show Act One Finale. In center with hands out is Steve Grubb, MC and Spirit of Christmas Present. To the readers left are Gary Fisher, Ernie; Michael Prentice, the Spirit of Christmas Past; Jerry Bradwell, Jack Murley; J.N. Howard, the Spirit of Christmas Yet-to-Be and to the extreme left, Johnny Jackson, Stage Manager. Director Paul Blazek is wearing a vest and looking at Steve Grubb.



The 50 man Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus leading off Act Two. Photographs by Laura Hanson

## Christmas Show

The 2007 Annual Christmas Show of the Chattanooga Choo Choo Chorus under the direction of Paul Blazek on Saturday, December 1, was a resounding success by the accounts of all those who appeared on stage and the appreciative audience. Three hundred tickets were sold or distributed by chorus members for the performance held in the Chattanooga State Humanities Auditorium.

The script was adapted from one performed by the Chorus several years ago called "What the Dickens! or a Partridge in a Parody". The performance was enhanced by a set that was in place for Chattanooga

*(Continued on page 2)*

## It's Chapter Party Time

**Fall Hayride.** Twenty people's clothes are full of hay. This social event organized by Gary Fisher with the help of Niles Fowler was more than most expected. Held on the 'Saul to Paul' hunting reserve under a full harvest moon, we rode through forests and over grassy fields. The weather was perfect with clouds clearing by noon and the week of rain soaking the dry fields permitting an open fire.

Half way through the hayride, we stopped at a picturesque church built from a single tree that overlooked a beautiful view. We all gathered inside for some singing.

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Christmas Show—Continued from page 1)*

State's production of another Dickens parody. Highlights of the program included sacred and secular Christmas carols and the traditional ending song Silent Night in a dark auditorium except for a lighted star.

The Chattanooga Christmas Community Chorus opened the second half of the show. This group of talented men joined the Choo Choo Chorus for the Christmas program, spending more than two months of weekly rehearsals to perfect their performances. Their powerful performances of new arrangements to Mary Had a Baby, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, and Angels We Have Heard on High mesmerized the audience. Several of these men have indicated they would like to join the regular chorus year-round. And several of them will join us on our Christmas Sing Outs to Hickory Valley Retirement Center, Creekside Retirement Center and Alexian Village.

The second half of the program also included an appearance by the Scenic City Chorus, the Sweet Adelines. This is the second time in recent years that they joined us for the Christmas Show. Thanks, Ladies.

The net proceeds of the sold-out performance went to the Walter Boehm Birth Defects Center located at Erlanger Hospital. The appreciative staff of the Boehm Center presented a lovely framed picture boxed of a couple of their patients and a thank you plaque. *Gary L. Fisher*

*(Chapter Party Time—Continued from page 1)*

There were plenty of hot dogs and brats (cooked on the open fire), baked beans, chili, potato salad, slaw, cookies and brownies for everyone. And of course roasted marshmallows.

Everyone agreed that we will do this again next year. See the hayride photographs on Page 4.

**Christmas Party.** This event was again held at the home of Janet and Steve Wixson. 55 men and their families attended (including five Chattanooga Christmas Community Chorus.)

Guest Henry Crutcher lead us in prayer and we woodshedded the Doxology. The food included ham, turkey, slow cooked beef and corned beef brisket, potatoes, vegetable salad, pecan pie and bananas foster. The weather was great and some people even ate on the deck.

Dave Collins installed the officers for 2008 and these are listed on Page 3. He had some interesting remarks about each of the installers

There was lots of small group singing as well as chorus singing and we sang our CCCC songs. I was in the kitchen for Mary Had a Baby and it sounded good even with a smaller group.

Presents were given to Chuck Wilson and Paul Blazek. Paul recognized our CCCC guests and the Bells for all they contributed. *Steve Wixson*

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 3, No 4  
Fourth Quarter 2007

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## 2007 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: The Spring Dixie Convention is on March 14-15, 2008 in Greenville, SC. Our Annual Show is on May 17th in the UTC Roland Hays Auditorium. The **International Barbershop Convention** is June 20-July 6 in Nashville. They are looking for volunteers who will attend for free. Details can be found on the [www.nashville2008.org/](http://www.nashville2008.org/) website.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to another of his choice based on contributions to the Chapter. During the third and fourth quarters, the Gandy went to Lucien Claiborne, Wally Edmondson, Gary Fisher (for the hayride), Niles Fowler (also for the hayride), Johnny Jackson, Fred Jessie, Lamar Owen, Bill Slack, Wilbur Strickland, Ed Thornton and Chuck Wilson.

## Letter to the Editor

Choo Choo Chorus,

Thanks for inviting us to the Barbershop Chorus Christmas party. We had such a nice evening. The Wixson's home is beautiful, the food was outstanding and the company beyond compare. I am so grateful to be associated with such a fine group of people. As the song says, "May your days be merry and right"... even if none of our Tennessee Christmases are white! *Dave Cadwell* [Dave was a member of the 2007 Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus. Thanks also to you, Dave, and the others who helped make our Christmas season joy filled and meaningful.]



## Fixing up the Chapter Rooms

Significant progress was made on fixing up our chapter rooms. The ceiling tiles have been repaired and the ceiling and walls repainted. The floors need sanding and refinishing and that will take place in January. Helping with the project are Clyde Rogers, Steve Wixson, etc.

## Director's Column

## President's Column

The Chorus enjoyed a great fourth quarter this year. We made some gains in our competition scores. We had what I believe to be the largest number of CCCC members in recent memory. We performed what may be the best Christmas show we have ever done, and finished out with a Christmas party which is fast becoming a wonderful tradition.

If there is a down side to this fourth quarter, it may be in booking gigs. We have a goal as a Chorus to perform on average one gig per month and I doubt we have done so. It is complex to get enough members together to accept gigs every time they come up, but it is a worthy goal, and, I think, singing in public keeps us sharp and helps attendance as well. We need to renew that effort as we head into 2008.

I wish all of you health, happiness, peace and harmony. *Beau Christain*

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Photographs from the October Hayride (upper) and Christmas party (lower)



A happy group of hayriders on what turned out to be a great day for a hayride



Inside the church made from a single tree. We did some singing before we left



Dave Collins (on right) installs officers for 2008 at the annual Christmas Party.



Dave Collins, Benny Malone, Bill Slack and Dave White sing the new tag to Angels We Have Heard on High

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## Photographs from the October Hayride



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Chattanooga, TN 37403**

**Fall Hayride.** Twenty people's clothes are full of hay. This social event organized by Gary Fisher with the help of Nile Fowler was more than most expected. Held on the hunting preserve of \_\_\_\_\_ under a full harvest moon, we rode through forests and over grassy fields. The weather was perfect with clouds clearing by noon and the week of rain soaking the dry fields permitting an open fire.

Half way through the hayride, we stopped at a picturesque church built from a single tree that overlooked a beautiful view. We all gathered inside for some singing.

There were plenty of hot dogs and brats (cooked on the open fire), baked beans, chili, potato salad, slaw, cookies and brownies for everyone. And of course roasted marshmallows.

Everyone agreed that we will do this again next year. See the hayride photographs on Page 4.

# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 4, No 1, First Quarter 2008



Choo Choo Chorus singing Dixie, Sam Jones' favorite song, at his funeral. Photographs by Sherry Fowler.

## Chapter Says Goodbye to Sam

Member Sam Jones died on Good Friday, March 21, 2008, and dying on the day his Lord died meant a lot to his family as expressed in moving eulogies by two grandchildren and others. Thirty-five members from our Choo Choo Chapter sang during the funeral held at Wilson Funeral Home in Ft Oglethorpe. The first song was *Dixie* which one would not think a funeral song, but it was Sam's favorite song. Later in the service *The Lord's Prayer* was sung, and both of these songs were sung in barbershop harmony.

Samuel Hardeman Jones Jr., was born September 9, 1932, in Nashville, TN. He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy having served from 1951-1954 and in the Korean War. From there he landed in Chattanooga and worked for companies such as Combustion Engineering and Hannah-Adams. He then went to work for the Public Works Department and eventually into the Chattanooga Fire Department, and retired in 1983 with the rank of Captain.

From there he spent some time in Panama City, FL, worked as a truck driver and then into bus driving. When he slowed down on his driving time (and into his third marriage), he started doing some farming at home and at his brother's farm in Chickamauga, GA. At the time of his death he was still employed with Wilson Funeral Home and Groome's Transportation.

While he was a bus driver, he went to Jones Memorial Methodist Church in East Ridge to promote a Tour Bus trip. There he met Charlie Stanbery, who was the director of the Choo Choo Chorus at the time, and Charlie invited him into the chapter. About a year later, Sam introduced his son David into Barbershop-ping, and David now sings with the Stone Mountain Chapter in Georgia, close to where he lives. There is also Sam's daughter, Renee, who doesn't sing barbershop but knows first hand how much her dad and brother have enjoyed the hobby and friendship. Sam's widow, Pat, is presently hospitalized and our thoughts and prayers are with her.

Pete Jones (no blood relationship) remembers Sam as a caring friend, almost always with a smile saying "hey pal or hey buddy how you doin' today". He was that way with just about everybody and I'll bet he's smiling and singing right now.

Pat and Margaret Crowe remember him this way. "Sam loved to sing and to share our love for Barber-shop Harmony. Through his persistence he convinced 16 of our members to form a *VLQ*. Our first meeting was April 1, 1999 with 9 members showing up. Sam looked around the room and said, "A heck of a day to start a project, it's April first, All Fools Day!". The group lasted a couple of years, through attrition of voice parts we had to disband, much to Sam's dismay.

(Continued on page 2)



(Chapter Says Goodbye to Sam—Continued from page 1)

“Up until the day he left us he still wanted another *VLQ*. We'll miss his enthusiasm for our craft and his witty remarks from the risers. Maybe he's starting another *VLQ* with all our old buddies who have gone on before. Leads like Earle Fraser, Lamar Smith, Bass's Lamar Green, Glenn Dabbs and the rest. I'm too not sure if Bari's and Tenors are allowed up there. Sammy, we sure are going to miss you.

“It is ironic that Sam's renewal card for this year arrived just in time for Director Paul Blazek to place it in the inside pocket of the red coat Sam was buried in. Now that is an eternal membership”

As for me, Sam was the first hand I shook on my first visit and was the face of the chorus to me until I became a part of it. *Steve Wixson*

## Chapter Returns to Form

March 12-14. Greenville, South Carolina, Dixie District 2008 Spring Convention. Most Improved Chapter—Choo Choo Chorus with a B-level score.

We've had a goal of reaching B level again after not reaching that level since 2001. Hard work by Director Paul Blazek and our members has paid off. A controversial assessment process for contest songs also contributed to our improved singing.

When you look at our competition scores over the years, we have consistently been a B chorus. We sing a heavy sing out and show schedule, compete at the Spring and Fall Dixie Conventions, learn a lot of new music each year, and have great fellowship. We been called on to host the Fall Dixie Convention for the past several years. It's a good balance, and that's the way we like it.

Our score was also helped with some presentation moves in *Sentimental Gentlemen From Georgia* introduced by new member Dave Fleury's wife, Tanya. She is a drama, etc coach with competition experience.

Now we need to hold onto and improve our position which benefits not only us, but those we sing to.

## Choo Choo Chapter In Harmonizer Magazine

For the second time in just over a year, the ChooChoo Chapter appeared in the Barbershop Harmony Society's national magazine, *The Harmonizer*. Page 37 of the November/December 2006 issue has an article with three color photographs that show the sets we built for two annual shows and a Christmas show. Page 37 of the January/February 2008 issue shows a color photograph of us singing a Christmas program at the Creekside Nursing Home. See photos on Page 4.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 4, No 1  
First Quarter 2008

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown on Page 4

**Website:** [choochoochorus.org](http://choochoochorus.org)

**Telephone:** 423-265-SING

**Editor:** Steve Wixson, [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net)

## 2007 Calendar Highlights

The full calendar is printed in the weekly newsletter and posted on the website. The following are highlights: Annual Show is on May 17th in the UTC Roland Hays Auditorium. The **International Barbershop Convention** is June 30-July 6 in Nashville. They are looking for volunteers (who will not get free admission as reported in last quarter's newsletter). Details can be found on the [www.nashville2008.org/](http://www.nashville2008.org/) website; Dixie Fall Convention, October 3-5, 2008, again in Chattanooga with the Choo Choo Chapter hosting..

## New Members the Quarter

Dustin Dotzler joins as a result of working with Lindy Blazek. Dave Fleury joins us after seeing our advertisement for last year's Christmas chorus. His inspiration is his father who sang barbershop. Jimmy Robertson joins us after singing Lead in the quartet formed for the Chattanooga Theatre Center's production of Music Man..Dave White transferred to us from Carolina Moonlighters chapter after recently moving to Chattanooga. He sang lead in the Accapella Fellas registered quartet.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed each week from member to member for service to the chapter. When Fred passed the Gandy, he listed the traits and passed it hilariously to himself. Actually members sometimes say they forgot the Gandy and then keep it for another week. At least Fred has the courage to be honest. Gandy Dancers for this quarter were

Lebron Brock, Frank Delaney, Dave Fleury, Fred Jesse, Pete Jones, Lamar Owens, Dave Rack, and Steve Wixson

## Singing Valentines 2007

Shown below is one of the approximately 70 Valentine deliveries made this year. Once again our quartets delivered heartfelt messages thru song, to young and old alike. Recipients and those around them enjoyed a pleasant surprise for a few moments to brighten their day. Our surprise, as Barbershoppers, is that there are many people that do not realize that Barbershop Quartets even exist and do what we do. This annual event helps to get our existence into the public eye. We just need more of it. *Pete Jones*



*Let Me Call You Sweetheart, Sweetheart.* The Singing Valentine quartet of, from left, Gary Fisher, Wally Edmundson, Beau Christian and Jimmy Robertson following singing to Stephanie Foster. The valentine was from husband Tim. Beau is holding their sweetheart.

## Chapter Room Improvements

Our chapter rooms will soon be much improved. At a special called meeting, the Board approved funds to sand and coat our maple wood floors and install some covers over the rather ugly windows.

Half of our old storage room is now being used by another organization. When their new room was built, the ceiling was made strong enough for us to use the space above it as storage. This was an opportunity to throw away lots of items collected over the years and we did. With painting of storage shelves, sanding the floor, and storing items on top of the new room, it feels like we have as much space as before. We've moved a table and chairs into the room and it can be used as a meeting room. There is also a small sound system for previewing and conducting assessments.

Work is underway to replace and paint ceiling tiles in both practice rooms. Two years ago mirrors were installed in the riser room so we can see how we look when we sing. Last year we purchased a new sound system that our quartets use when they sing out, and we use during chorus rehearsals. We will soon install a screen for our viewgraph projector that our Director uses to teach new music. We have a great facility.

An Open House will be held in the near future.

### Officers for 2008

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Baritone	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
Bass/Admin	Dave Rack	706-965-6567	drack@unumprovident.com
Bass/Music	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com





An impressive welcome at the entrance of the National Cemetery—two fire truck with crossed ladders and a line of firemen.



Marine giving folded American Flag to Sam's family. Pete Jones, in the red coat, looks on with the other pallbearers.

### Choo Choo Chorus photographs published in the Harmonizer Magazine



Phantom of the Barbershop Show—2005



Girls, Girls, Girls Show—2006



Creekside Nursing Home Sing Out—Christmas 2006



8' gingerbread house from Hansel & Gretel Show—Christmas 2003

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403

# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 4, No 2, Second Quarter 2008



Paul Blazek directing chorus and audience in God Bless America finale. When the audience joined in, the American Flag was raised into place.  
Photograph by Harold Zumbrun

## Annual Show

A Great Show! After many anxious moments, phone calls, and sleepless nights, all turned out well. After receiving the surprising news, just a week before the show, that our long-awaited guest quartet would be unable to perform, and many phone calls around the district in an effort to secure a replacement, a group of local high schoolers came to our rescue.

Thank you to chorus members and our own quartets for a terrific job. We received many favorable comments from our audience. The quartet, Sum-R-Fun, was a big hit and enjoyed by all. The Ridgeland High School Show Chorus, under the direction of Anthony Goss, gave a fantastic performance. We were all pleasantly surprised and extremely pleased by their singing, dancing, and showmanship. Thank you to Tanya Fleury for an outstanding job as our Stage Manager. She certainly helped make the show a success.

Thank you to Clarence Wall for doing me a favor

*(Continued on page 2)*

## 20 Years of Special Olympics

The Choo Choo Chorus began its affiliation with Tennessee Area 4 Special Olympics with an appearance by the quartet "Backstage" in 1985. Lindy Blazek, wife of bass, Paul, asked the quartet to do the National Anthem for the Opening Ceremonies of the area Aquatics Meet at McCallie School. The director of Area 4, the late Lloyd Ray Smith, was an avid fan of barbershop music and asked Paul if the entire chorus could sing at the spring Track and Field meet. The chorus could not get around to it that year, but when Paul took over as director the chorus sang at the 1988 Track and Field meet, also held at McCallie School. The chorus has not missed a spring appearance at Track and Field since then! The chorus also sings at the annual Bowling Tournament each fall; the numbers vary from a VLQ to an entire chorus for that performance. In addition, a quartet always sings at the annual Aquatics meet and the audience always asks for more

*(Continued on page 3)*

(Annual Show—Continued from page 1)

by coming to our aid as emcee for the show.

Thank you to Dave Fleury for arranging the Afterglow at First Christian Church. The food was very good and the fellowship great.

Thank you to the ladies of the Choo-Choo Belles for preparing our sack suppers, which were very good, very filling, and served with pleasant and supporting smiles.

One disappointment was the low audience turnout for the show. We need to be able to share our music and hard work with more people. Too, another disappointment was the low chorus member participation in the Afterglow. Those who are willing to put forth the effort it takes to arrange these activities deserve our participation in them. *W. C. Strickland*, Co-Chair

## Profile of a Member

Frank T. Delaney was born on November 29, 1923 in Chattanooga, TN. He attended Notre Dame School and then Notre Dame University completing a 2 year Pearl Harbor accelerated program.

He entered the Navy in 1943 and was assigned to the South Pacific warzone. He served as aviation machinist and volunteered as a aerial gunner when needed. Back in the States, he was assigned to the „Loon Project“ which took the German V-1 buzz bomb missile and developed it into a weapon.

His military career was profiled by Veteran's History Project available through the Library of Congress. Frank has a copy of the DVD that you can borrow.

After the military, he returned to the family industrial distributor business, working in sales and retired as Vice-president in 1984. He then started his own industrial distributor and machinery dealer company, and worked it until he closed it down in 2006.

He has been married to Joyce Molley for 53 years and they have 6 children and 6 grandchildren.

His singing career started as a tenor in the Notre Dame School Boy's Choir, and he rehearsed in the same room (now All Saint's Academy) we rehearse in. He now sings in his parish choir and with the Knights of Columbus at mass on certain Sundays.

Frank became interested in barbershop when Paul Blazek substituted as choir director at his parish. In 2001, Paul invited Frank to the annual show, *A Barbershop Odyssey*, and in 2003 he started attending meetings. That year he filled an unexpired term on the Board as Member-at-large. He was elected to the Board as Member-at-large for years 2006-8.

During his tenure in the chorus, Frank has served as ticket, ad and program chairman for many shows and is largely responsible for the financial success of these events. He is the oldest member of the chorus at age 84, and he wants to sing in a quartet in the future.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 4, No 2  
Second Quarter 2008

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barber-shop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown on Page 4

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**Editor:** Steve Wixson, [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net)

## 2008 Calendar Highlights

The Chapter sang for two Memorial Day events at the National Cemetery. The first was on the day the Boy Scouts placed flags on graves and the second was the Memorial Day Celebration.

The International Convention is June 30 to July 6 in Nashville, and they still need volunteers.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. Recipients this quarter are Jimmy Robertson, Wally Edmonson, Art Southerlin, Karl Dommert and Tom Keegan.

## Sing Out at Lookouts Game

On May 30th the Chapter sang the National Anthem at the Lookouts baseball game as shown in the photograph on Page 4. Several members brought family and enjoyed an evening of baseball. There were lots of hot dogs and ice cream eaten. We sat behind home plate and thought that a good location to catch a foul ball. It was not, but the Lookouts won.

We enjoyed it so much that we hope to schedule another before the season ends.

## Letter to the Editor

Brother Wixson, You do an excellent job with your newsletter. I always read it as soon as it comes in. I really appreciate knowing what is going on with the Choo-Choo'ers and staying in touch.

I hope to see you all sometime this summer. I am working with a quartet now and we are doing a lot of gigs. Keep up the good work and Keep America Singing. Harmonically, *Argyle Kaufman*



## Chorus sang for two Memorial Weekend events at the National Cemetery



Chorus sings National Anthem and God Bless America for Memorial Day Ceremony. Toward the right are US Senator Bob Corker and US Representative Zack Wamp. Photograph by Sherry Niles. The Chorus also sang for Boy Scout flag placing.



Choo Choo Chorus sings the National Anthem to open the Special Olympics Track and Field Event Photograph by Tanya Fleury

*(Special Olympics—Continued from page 1)*  
than the National Anthem!

Lloyd Ray used to say that he had the only area in the US that had its own Barbershop Chorus! See a photograph of this year's event above. *Lindy Blazek*

[The above was written by Lindy, who has been a Special Olympics coach longer than she has been my wife (36 and 34 years, respectively). The chapter has

been able to support Special Olympics not only with music but also financially, by donating proceeds from a couple of our Christmas shows. I think everyone who has ever sung at one of the SO events will agree that they come away encouraged and uplifted by the spirit of the games and the athletes who participate.  
*Paul Blazek*



Choo Choo Chorus sings the National Anthem at the May 30th Chattanooga Lookouts baseball game. Photograph by Abbie Hanson

### **Annual Show Afterglow Photographs**



The Sum-R-Fund quartet made us laugh again with more of their comedy singing. Photographs by Steve Wixson



A great breakfast was prepared by the First Christian Church kitchen crew with sausage, bacon, eggs, potatoes, biscuits, and gravy.

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 4, No 3, Third Quarter 2008



Photograph of the Chorus preparing for the Fall Dixie Chorus Contest and showing our beautiful refinished floor

## Guest Night

Guest night was a big success. We were able to put 40 singers on the risers. This included some former members who we had not seen in a long time, some current members who have been inactive, some members of the Cleveland chorus, and some guests who had never heard a barbershop chorus before. The guests were taught "My Wild Irish Rose" and a tag, "Annie". They were able to sing these with the chorus and sounded good doing it.

The barbecue and "fixins" were a big hit. The Belles were wonderful in serving and cleaning up and deserve more thanks than we will probably give them. The barbecue was so good we had trouble getting some of the chorus members to quit eating and perform. When

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Chapter Rooms Renovation

Shown in the photograph above is our beautiful refinished floor, part of the redecoration of chapter rooms at the All Saints Academy building. These floors were almost black and possibly never refinished since Frank Delaney was a student in this room when the building was Notre Dame School. We had to vacate our three rooms during this time and we even managed to throw out some stuff. Thanks to Bill Slack for finding a floor refinisher who gave us a good price.

The circles on the floor shown in the photograph are student desk marks from the Notre Dame era.

Karl Dommert borrowed a spray gun and painted the chair riser room ceiling after Steve Wixson replaced ceiling tiles in both practice rooms with the

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Guest Night—Continued from page 1)*

barbershoppers prefer anything to singing you know something unusual is going on.

Our 18 guests included 12 men, 8 of who were first time visitors. Some of the guests said they would be back next week. The society says to get one new member a chapter has to have 10 visitors and to have 10 visitors you have to invite 100 men. Either we were very efficient in getting guests to come or we invited 180+ people. Either way the chorus deserves a hearty well done for what was accomplished.

After the eating, the chorus and quartets performed several songs for the guests who were enthusiastic and appreciative. Among the guests who came to listen but not sing were two people from Stuttgart, Germany, a lady and her young adult son. They tasted barbecue and heard barbershop for the first time ever and enjoyed both immensely. An elderly couple who didn't sing and could not stay for the whole thing said they enjoyed the music and would definitely be at our next show. Two ladies came who were interested in "Sweet Adelines" and just wanted to hear us sing.

Probably the best indicator of success is that everyone seemed to have a very good time. Guests and chorus members alike had smiles on their faces all night and the conversation only stopped for the singing. The guests left with many expressions of thanks for such a good time and praise for the singing. I am reasonably sure we will gain new members from this but we have also gained support and appreciation for our chapter and barbershop singing in general from the guests who did not sing. These people may tell others about us and give us valuable publicity. We may have even helped barbershop singing in Germany. For those of us who believe the preservation of this style of music is important beyond our own participation, this too is a worthy accomplishment.

I close with thanks to the many members and wives who worked hard in many areas and those who invited visitors. For whatever you did, THANKS!!!  
*Lebron Brock*

*(Chapter Room Remodeling—Continued from page 1)*

help of Gary Fisher, Beau Christian, Steve Grubb and Steve Irvine. Wixson rolled part of the ceiling in the mirror riser room, and with cataracts thought he had done a good job. Following cataract surgery, he discovered that he had actually done a rather bad job.

A big crew came out to move the furniture for the floor refinish and while there they also painted walls and trim.

There is still some work to do to finish the job. Photographs that were removed for wall painting need to be replaced and updated. Clyde Rogers donated some material to make covers for our windows that look ratty now. *Steve Wixson*

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 4, No 3  
Third Quarter 2008

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## 2008 Calendar Highlights

Sing outs this quarter included Creekside Nursing Home, two Lookouts baseball games, funeral for long-time member and officer of the chorus, Bernard Wheeler.

Upcoming events include North River Civic Center, a family reunion in Alabama, 2nd Annual Hayride, Christmas program at First Tennessee Pavilion, annual Christmas Program on December 13th again benefiting the Walter Boehm Birth Defects Center, the annual Christmas Party, and December sing outs to several retirement centers. Details at [choochoochorus.org](http://choochoochorus.org).

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. Recipients this quarter were Dave White, Johnny Jackson, Beau Christian, Gary Fisher, Niles Fowler, Brooks Gist, Steve Grubb, Fred Jesse, Lebron Brock and Tom Keegan.

## Chattanooga Christmas Chorus

If you received this newsletter and are not a member of the Choo Choo Chorus, you are invited to join with us starting October 13 and be a part of what we call the Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus. Our goal is 100 men on stage to sing an acapella male chorus program of sacred and secular Christmas music. You do not have to be a member of the Chorus to sing and this is a short time commitment until the Christmas program is over.

Last year Paul Blazek, our director, introduced some great arrangements including *Mary Had a Baby*, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* and *Gloria* that moved the audience. More new arrangements are planned for this year. Come and help make it happen!

## Profile of a Member

Known to all as "PAT," George Wilson Crowe was born March 17th 1929, six months before the "GREAT DEPRESSION" at Fort William Ontario Canada, a town of 32,000, which is now known as Thunder Bay with a population of 120,000. Located on the north shore of Lake Superior, a shipping point of grain from the west, and iron ore from the north, to ports in the eastern Canada and U.S.A.

It's long cold winters are also known for producing many NHL professional hockey players and an abundance of children. Must be the snuggling on those cold nights. I used to wonder when I'd hear all those daddy's talking about scoring.

The depression must of had an effect on my parents after producing little Crowe's every two years, there was a sabbatical of four years before the sixth one arrived in the nest.

As you may note I'm not only over the hill, I'm sliding rapidly down it towards my 80th year on next St. Patrick's day.

I married my late wife Eleanor on Sept. 25th 1950. We had two children, David, who in August retired after 30 years service in the navy, as a Senior Chief Explosive Ordinance Disposal Technician, and daughter Kelly, who also served 3 years in the navy, and turned down a appointment to the Naval Academy to get married. She is a Certified Personal Trainer.

They gave me a total of 3 grand children.

On April 1999, I married Margaret Green and together we now have a great life, and a combined 8 grandchildren and a great-grandchild.

I began my affiliation with Barbershopping in Sarnia Ontario, Canada. I rejoined this great hobby with the Choo Choo Chorus in 1992. I have served the chapter as a Board member, Public Relations Vice president and Editor of the Blender (a previous chapter newsletter), and now as another voice in the lead section, missing all those who went on who are now no longer with us, ringing those chords. *Pat Crowe*

## The Choo Choo Belles

The Choo Choo Belles are the wives or significant others of the members of the chorus. The ladies support the chorus by working during the chorus shows and district conventions hosted by Chattanooga, by preparing food for guest nights and shows, and by attending sing-outs and conventions.

The chorus met downstairs at Brainerd Baptist Church in 1991 when Wilbur joined the group. At that time 10 to 15 of the spouses would accompany their husbands and gather in an adjoining classroom. We made Christmas shirts, ornaments, arranged flowers, and enjoyed each other. Evelyn Fraser presented the idea of creating and selling a cookbook to raise money.

*(Continued on page 4)*

### Officers for 2008

President	Beau Christian	837-0263	wbc37380@yahoo.com
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Lead/Admin	Steve Grubb	596-3105	scgrn57@comcast.net
Lead/Music	Hobby Thomas	622-5276	stanleychatt@aol.com
Baritone	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	jjackson@wattsagent.com
Bass/Admin	Dave Rack	706-965-6567	drack@unumprovident.com
Bass/Music	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com

*(Continued from page 3)*

As a result the Choo Choo Belles (Evelyn suggested the name) organized and opened a checking account. We gathered up our favorite recipes and had a cookbook printed, and sold hundreds of copies. We accompanied our chorus members to the conventions around the Dixie District, enjoyed exploring the cities we visited, and always arranged to have a meal after the competition with everyone in attendance at a local restaurant. A good time was had by all.

We have ordered shirts for ourselves and chorus members, and we organized the effort to have the gold vests made for the chorus.

The current officers are: Mary Strickland and Audry Gist, Co-Presidents, Margaret Crowe, Treasurer, Glenda Erwin, Benevolence. Each of us have held our positions much longer than we ever intended. We are well aware that new "blood" and new ideas are needed and they are very welcome.

I want to personally thank each of the ladies who gave their time to help make the recent convention a success.

*Mary Strickland*



Choo Choo Chorus photograph taken at Spring 2008 Dixie Convention

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 4, No 4, Fourth Quarter 2008



At the Cleveland Show in Dixon Hall on Lee University Campus with Chad Guyton directing, Community Chorus' Henry Crutcher's deep bass "Behold" startled the audience and created a light moment as he introduced with scripture *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Photo by Tanya Fleury.



The CCCCC at the Chattanooga Show in Bond Auditorium at Chattanooga State with Paul Blazek directing. Photo by Janet Wixson.

## The Cleveland and Chattanooga Christmas Shows

The first of what we hope are many shared Christmas shows was held in Cleveland on Monday, December 8 and in Chattanooga on Saturday, December 13. A new acronym, CCCCC, was generated for the

Cleveland and Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus with members from the Cleveland Scream Machine and Chattanooga Choo Choo Choruses plus men

(Continued on page 2)



(Chapter Party Time—Continued from page 1)

from our communities. 50 men were on stage for the Cleveland show and 59 for the Chattanooga show. The Cleveland show was free and baskets were passed through the audience to benefit the William Hall Rodgers Christmas Basket Fund (food baskets for needy families at Christmas time.) Tickets were sold for the Chattanooga show that benefited the Walter E Boehm Birth Defect Center. We sang to a full house for the first time in a quite a few shows and we can credit our guys for selling tickets and Publicity Chairman, Lamar Owens, for radio, TV, and newspaper coverage.

The Chairman for our show was Jerry Bradwell who titled the show *Christmas in Dixie*. Tanya Fleury did a great job of filling in as Mistress of Ceremonies. The ticket manager was Wally Edmondson. The set designer was Steve Wixson who incorporated large sheet music covers from the songs the CCCCC sang. The Belles again provided sack dinners between the dress rehearsal and the show, and donated \$75 to the Walter E Boehm Center. We got a standing ovation.

Two great arrangements were added to the CCCCC, *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*, and *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* which began with a VLQ-like duet sung in classic Latin. Last year's favorite, *Mary Had a Baby*, again felt great to sing and was sure to have moved the audience. We are moving slowly toward Paul's goal of 100 men on stage. *Steve Wixson*

## It's Christmas Party Time

The annual Christmas party, at the home of your editor and his wife, Janet, was again a big success with members from our Chapter and the CCCCC attending along with their families (total of 64). This was not a sit down dinner, and people could move around to visit and sing. Officers were installed by Ev Nau, Director of Major Gifts for the Harmony Foundation who drove down and back from Nashville on a stormy day. He brought along Sean Devine, Lead with the O.C. Times quartet who won gold at International this year. Slow cooked beef and corn beef briskets were again served. Check out the party photos. *Steve Wixson*



Paul Blazek leads the assembled Christmas party goers in our CCCCC songs from the Christmas Show. Sounded pretty good.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN

Volume 4, No 4

Fourth Quarter 2008

The Choo Choo Chorus is a member of the Barber-shop Harmony Society and the Dixie District

**Meeting:** The chapter meets Monday nights from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm in the All Saints Academy Building at the address shown on Page 4

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**Editor:** Steve Wixson, [wixson@chattanooga.net](mailto:wixson@chattanooga.net)



The Great Fall 2008 Contest Photograph of the Choo Choo Chorus

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from a member to a member of his choice in recognition of contribution to the chapter. This quarter's recipients were Art Southerlin, Erby Erwin, Wally Edmonson and Lamar Owens. This list is shorter than usual as one unnamed member loved it so much that he conveniently forgot to bring it to several meetings and therefore could not pass it on. We also did not pass it during the CCCCC Christmas rehearsals.

## Letter to the Editor

I enjoyed getting the Christmas Chorus email and especially the quarterly newsletter about Sam Jones. I was honored to be allowed to sing with you at his funeral and was actually able to pick myself out in the picture. I've printed a copy and will be taking it to pulmonary rehab, where Sam and I both exercised, so that I can share it with those who remember him there. I love singing with you guys, but I feel like I just can't spare the time year round. I love singing with you at Christmas and look forward to it every year. Thanks for including me, *Dave Cadwell*

## President's Column

With this fourth quarterly Newsletter, we end another busy year in the Chorus. I looked back over my calendar for the quarter and found such highlights as our excellent score at the Fall competition - even as we hosted it once again. Then, there was our Chorus hayride, just one more example of fun and fellowship. I found that we as a Chorus had sung seven sing outs this quarter up thru and including those remaining as I write this.

Our Christmas show was a great success and I believe we put a record number of guys on stage. I don't have numbers yet, but I believe we will be able to support our selected charity at least at the same level as last year. And, as I write this, tomorrow is our Chorus Christmas Party. So - by my math, including rehearsals, we have come together 22 times in three months, and, of course, that doesn't include Board or Music Leadership Team (MLT) meetings. Like I said, so we end another busy year!

And so, as I finish my third year as President, I want to thank everyone for their help and participation in making the Choo Choo Chorus what it is - full of fun and fellowship and chord-worshipping. I extend my best wishes to incoming President Lebron Brock and the entire incoming Board and MLT. *Beau Christian*



Clyde Rogers presents incoming President Lebron Brock with a new shiny gold spike for the Gandy Dancer Award.



2008 quartet Gold winner Sean Devine sings with Dave White, Johnny Jackson and Wilbur Strickland. He sang with others too.

### Officers for 2009 (installed at the Christmas Party by Ev Nau from the Harmony Foundation)

President	Lebron Brock	903-0005	lbrock2020@yahoo.com
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Bass/Admin	Dave Rack	706-965-6567	drack@unumprovident.com
Bass/Music	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com





At the Cleveland Show, Rock City Four sings one of their four songs.



The Veteran's Day Sing Out



The Chattanooga Christmas Market Sing Out



The Watts Bar Sing Out



Paul leads the audience in a Christmas carol at The Alexian Village Sing Out Photograph by Howard Hamilton

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403

# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 5, No 1, First Quarter 2009



John Johnston, Paul Blazek, Hobby Thomas and Wally Edmondson sing to BiLo Floral Manager, Linda Atchley, in appreciation for help with flowers for this year's fund raiser. At right is new a card adapted from the Barbershop Harmony website and our message on the back of the

## Singing Valentines 2009—A Success

A successful Valentine program Begins and Ends with YOU!

This year I was privileged to work with many of you to make a successful program for funding our activities throughout this calendar year. On several occasions our group has expressed appreciation to me for accepting the chairmanship for this effort. I feel I must point out that this is an effort by and for many. To do so I must give the following examples:

Art Southerland worked extensively as a back-ground organizer. Art helped to set up the basic plan of who, what, where, when and assisted throughout the campaign with communications.

Steve Wixson provided much of the what... from the beautiful card and flier design to many hours preparing the street sign updates for the new number.

Pete Jones has chaired this most recently and came in to assist to get me started and provide numbers and contacts. We will certainly miss Pete during his absence from our chorus.

Once things were underway many folks helped to take and email orders. Those serving on the phone were Jerry Bradwell Wally Edmondson, Sherry Fowler (Nile's wife), Roger Coffman, Beau Christian, Clyde Rogers, Art Southerland, Lamar Owens, Wilbur Strickland, Paul Blazek, Gary Fisher, and Bernard Peek. In addition to the Paypal money processing that we have had in previous campaigns, Lamar was able to set up the web site to take actual Valentine orders over the internet with great success.

The dispatch function is certainly one where experience counts. Paul Blazek did a masterful job of putting together the many orders to deliverable routes and teaching me how to track them. Frank Delaney also came out to assist with the collation and organization.

Friday the "office" was staffed by Gary Fisher and Paul Blazek who took orders and dispatched to three quartets in the field. Classic Harmony, Rock City Four, and Scenic City Sound. Due to great coordination and team work from all those above we hit some

very small windows of opportunity for delivery.

Saturday Bernard Peek and Clyde Rogers manned the phones until mid afternoon. It was pretty quiet, but all the same we were ready to serve. In the field were Four Guys, Chattanooga guys, and Classic Harmony. I have a personal thank you to Chattanooga guys for allowing me to sing on two of them for my personal sales.

Niles and Lucien and one or two more sold them directly but did not sign the form and my memory is bad... Thank you to all. It is great to work with and for you! *Karl Dommert*

## Profile of a Member

Dave White grew up in upstate New York, and has sung in school choruses and church choirs practically all his life including a lot of solo work in churches. Dave sang in a men's quartet in college, and thinks that whetted his appetite for quartet singing. He is also a Viet Nam vet, and received the Army Commendation medal before coming home from Viet Nam. He has two children and 2 grandchildren who live in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Dave joined SPEBSQSA in 1980 with the New Braunfels, Texas chorus and sang in two different registered quartets there: *The One And Only*, and *Those Were The Days*. He served on the Board there after his first year, first as Secretary, then Treasurer, Membership V.P., and finally, President. He also served as show Chairman on a joint show with Austin Texas. chapter on the 50th anniversary show (of SPEBSQSA) in 1988.

Dave moved to Hickory, N.C. in 1992, also serving on the Board as Secretary, Membership V.P. Program V.P., and two years as President. He also served the Dixie District as an Area Counselor in 1993-94. He formed the quartet *Acappella Fellas* in 1994, and that quartet is still together today. Dave was voted chapter Barbershopper of the Quarter in 2nd quarter of 1997, and Hickory Chapter Barbershopper Of the Year in 2000. He also sang with the North Carolina Harmony Brigade 1996-2000.

He moved to Chattanooga in 2007 to sort of "retire." His wife, Sandy, and he really enjoy living in the area, and he is enjoying his association with the Choo Choo Chorus.

## Spring Convention Update

Twenty-five members and many wives made the trip to Winston-Salem for the Spring Dixie Convention. We sang *How's Every Little Thing in Dixie* and *Georgia on My Mind*, and we accomplished our goals of qualifying and again singing at the „B“ level. See the photographs on Page 4.

We discovered, while reading the convention program, that we are again hosting the Fall event.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

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Volume 5, No 1  
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## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. Lamar Owens retired the old Gandy Spike to Frank Delaney with much applause from everyone. President Lebron Brock presented the new shiny brass Gandy Spike donated by Clyde Rogers to Wally Edmondson for taking on the Membership VP job. Other recipients this quarter were Karl Dommert, Bill Slack, Lebron Brock, Niles Fowler, Pat Crowe, Jerry Bradwell, Wally Bigby, Fred Jesse, Paul Blazek, and Dave Collins.

## Barbershop Harmony Society Todd Wilson Visits

Todd Wilson from BHS headquarters joined Chattanooga and Cleveland members at Wally's Restaurant for an information gathering/sharing meeting.

The meeting was an eye opener in several respects. For one it made us realize that the problems we have are problems every chorus has. Two, the solutions are known and available. With these statements in mind one might ask, is that all that there is to it? If you guessed "no" you would be correct. Solutions have to be implemented to make a difference. Implementation depends on leadership having the ability and devoting the necessary effort to make it happen. It also depends on the chapter members being willing to accept changes and programs suggested by the leadership.

Will we as leaders and members do these things? Time will tell. We now have the materials we need to make important changes. That is a big first step. The next step depends on how much we want improvement. The signs so far are encouraging. The test will be whether our enthusiasm for this will last in the coming months and become an ongoing work instead of a one time quick fix. *Lebron Brock*





Todd Wilson from Barbershop Harmony Society headquarters (second from left) visits with Chattanooga and Cleveland choruses. From left, Lebron Brock, Todd, Wally Edmondson, Lars Issiacson (Cleveland), Steve Wixson, Paul Blazek and Jim Larkin (Cleveland).

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Bass/Music	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com



Spring 2009 Convention in Winston-Salem, NC. Top: Playing the Bones and Shaking the Tambourine move from the song *How's Every Little Thing in Dixie*. Photograph by Steve Grubb, Bottom: Relaxing with wives in the Marriott after the performance. Photograph by Steve Wixson

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 5, No 2, Second Quarter 2009



The *Salute to America* stage with MC Clarence Wall, the chorus and the Four Grand quartet singing the introduction to *God Bless America*.

## The Choo Choo Chorus Presents *Salute to America*

WOW, What a show! The May 9 *Salute to America* show performed on the stage of Chattanooga State Technical Community College's C.C. Bond Humanities Auditorium was fantastic! I am always amazed by the talents and dedication of our members and leadership.

I was privileged to be asked to serve as chairman for the spring show. In the process I had to ask several people what I was to do to get ready.

I asked Steve Wixson about stage planning and he advised me he had it already started. Gladly I became informed of the plan which include more cardboard flats and a large video screen. Steve with video help from Gary Fisher should go into show business. We couldn't help but look good under the fantastic set and video presentation. A truly beautiful work. Thanks to all who contributed material for this presentation.

I asked about the script and how to go about selecting an MC. Paul suggested he would contact Clarence Wall to handle the MC. Clarence did a masterful job with the presentation.

Paul Blazek and Wally Edmondson worked together to make up a new version of the several script examples. The result was rehashed several times and became once again customized to our presentation. A

very fine job of coauthoring!

Wally additionally handled the ticket tracking and monies from the ticket sales in the prolonged absence of Johnny. Wally was more than happy that Johnny made it to the show, as where we all. The tickets hardware was once again provided by Steve Wixson, master of the computer printing press. And I think a bit of scissor work too. Wally and Steve we all owe you many thanks for your work.

The advertising was great. Lamar Owens contacted the usual suspects on radio and print news. In addition the Inter net was posted with information on location and tickets. Steve Wixson also provided several versions of the show Flier from his magic press again. These were posted by many of our membership around town at our favorite haunts and places of business.

The spring show is one of our major chances to raise monies to pay expenses for our chapter during the year. To do this we offer printing space in the program that is handed to our guests. This space is to thank our patrons, friends, colleagues, and area businesses for their support of our endeavors. I found out these are called advertisements. Since no one really pays attention to the commercials I believe Thank

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

you's are better. Please pull your copy of the program out and patronize these places of business. Remember to call the owner out and say thank you as a member of The Choo Choo Chorus.

The add sales were particularly challenging this year. Frank Delaney and Dave Fleury put together a plan to make ads more attractive where they would be placed not only in the program for this show, but also our Christmas show program. The prepared packets and encouraged us all to contact a few places to offer the advertisement space. Many of you who normally bring in some regulars were not able to get the support of past years. I had this happen myself. Things were looking pretty slim in the eleventh hour when Frank Delaney, Lucien Claiborne, Dave Rack, and Dave Fleury made some final calls and in the end the tally for add sales totaled \$4,200.00. We will each benefit from the effort of all members that brought in advertisements big or small. I thank all who made the effort.

The night of the show there were still a few details to handle. Jerry Bradwell stepped down from the risers to handle the stage management and run the video presentation. Many helped to set up the sets and position the stage equipment. Steve Wixson had the preparations ready and also a case of the flu. Still he came to stand in the corner and point to what we did not figure for ourselves. Steve got to sit out front (again in the corner) and see the show. And thanks to Bob Hobgood from Chattanooga State for all he did to dress the stage, trim the lights and run the sound from the booth.

We had a few of our quartets step out and give our audience the classic four on the floor experience of barbershop quartetting. Scenic City Sound, Rock City 4, and Four Grand performed. Great job guys! We hope many more will follow to join your legacy in future years.

The one thing left is to make sure the chorus knows what to do the day of the show. We have to get dressed, (hopefully in the right outfit, Chuck) and rest and eat between the practice and the show. Knowing that Wilbur Strickland had handled this in the past, I asked him, What to do? He advised I call on Mary (Strickland). I contacted her and asked if she could help us to take care of the house and the food for the Chorus. Mary took charge of the arrangements and even gave me a job. I had to bring the ice. The food preparations were great! And the house well cared for! Thank you so much to all the ladies that took care of us!

Finally, the culmination of all these preparations is the upwelling of spirit in each of us and in our audience. A sense of pride in the community accomplishment! To get to this point takes foresight, conviction

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN

Volume 5, No 2

Second Quarter 2009

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and courage, flexibility and strength. It takes faith in the community of the chorus to rise to the occasion.

We would like to thank Paul Blazek and Chuck Wilson for the training and preparation that brought the Chorus to where we are. And to Paul for the encouragement, direction, feedback and inspiration on the risers during the show, Thanks for letting me be a part of it. *Karl Dommert*

## Veterans of All Wars Sing Out

The Veterans of All Wars Museum was started in January 2008 by ex-POW and Founder Robert Honeycutt with the help of Niles & Sherry Fowler and others. The biggest contributor was Les Coffey who had purchased the historic Peerless Woolen Mills complex with plans to rent/lease sections to individuals for small business, etc. Mr. Coffey not only donated the 11 rooms of the museum but all the furniture and display cases. He has furnished the lights & water as well. The list is too numerous to mention. Without him, the museum could not have opened. The Grand Opening was July 12, 2008.

The sing out was on May 16th. On the program was the 800 Mile Death March which Mr. Honeycutt had to endure and took place in Germany in 1945. It was re-enacted with the help of JROTC students from Ridgeland, LFO & Lafayette high schools and many others. Veterans & POWs were recognized. The touching Missing Man Ceremony was presented.

We want to thank those of you who took time and made the effort to sing at the re-enactment. I got a lot of nice comments on how we sounded. The songs we sang were very appropriate and Mr. Honeycutt really appreciated it. We (the staff) thought it turned out very well for our first time. Every time the chorus goes to sing somewhere; it seems it's always appropriate and well received. *Niles and Sherry Fowler*. [See photographs on Page 4.]

## Profile of a Member

Bill Slack was born in Decatur, GA on January 23, 1949. He sang in church choirs and while in college joined an acapella Madrigal group discovering he could sing difficult music. They made an album and he would be happy to share it to prove he can do it.

He got interested in barbershop because his aunt was named Marion, was single and a librarian. Naturally, the Music Man show was popular in his family.

In about 1964, his parents took him to see a Peachtree Chorus show in the great Fox theatre in Atlanta. The Buffalo Bills quartet performed, and he came away thinking that was really great. During the next few years, they went to several more Peachtree Chorus shows each time he liked it more and more.

Bill went to college in Danville, Kentucky and attended a chapter meeting of the local chorus. At that time he thought it would take too much time, so he did not join. In retrospect now he wishes someone had stayed on him and got him to join.

He's been a prison guard, parole officer and a District Attorney. He now has his own law practice.

In 1979, now in Chattanooga, he attended some of our meetings. Again no one stayed on him and he did not join until Bernard Wheeler, who was a member because of Fred Jesse, got him to join. Bill remembers riding to meetings with Bernard and Sam Jones and listening to their tall stories.

He was a baritone for 6 months, then moved to bass. He outclassed all of the other basses so that wasn't a challenge. There was an upcoming Christmas show, and he had other commitments and couldn't attend practice. He thought he could learn the melody part with the free time that he had and became a lead.

Then the lead for Rock City 4 quartet moved and created an opening. He auditioned and they were wise enough to take him. They helped him tremendously to learn how to sing in a quartet. He initially tried to harmonize with them, but learned that was not his job. No, don't harmonize—I'm the lead. The man who is the boss hog. His job is to sing consistently and they harmonize. He is to perform. The other three guys in fact have the hard part.

He has been President for one year (remembers that he was impeached.) He has served on the Board, and currently is Program VP. He's been to four internationals and serves on Dixie District convention staff.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. Members receiving the Gandy this quarter were Steve Wixson, Matt Blazek, Bill Slack, Frank Delaney for outstanding annual show ad sales, Art Southerlin, Johnny Jackson, Pat Crowe and

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Bass/Music	Wilbur Strickland	504-3567	strick@vol.com





Rock City 4 Performing at the Annual Show



Scenic City Sound Performing at the Annual Show



Veteran's of All Wars Museum Sing Out



Veteran's of All Wars Museum Capture Soldier Reenactment

Chattanooga Chapter  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 5, No 3, Third Quarter 2009



After dinner entertainment at the Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel for the Lionel Train Society. Note railroad engine on screen.

## A Summer of Sing Outs

The chorus wanted more sing outs and our Business Manager, Lamar Owens, went to work and got them. Shown above is the sing out for the Lionel Train Operating Train Society's annual meeting held at the Chattanooga Choo Choo Convention Center. This was one of the larger sing outs in recent memory and we dressed in our tuxedos appropriate for the occasion.

So far we have performed for Life Care of East Ridge, Alexian Village, Hickory Valley Retirement Home, Special Olympics Field and Track meet, Veterans of all Wars, Boy Scouts Memorial Day Flag Placement ceremony at National Cemetery, Memorial Day Ceremony at National Cemetery, Chattanooga Lookouts game, Alexian Nursing Home, Grove Level Baptist Church and Blue Bird Hollow Farms.

Upcoming appearances will be Special Olympics Bowling Tournament, Prater's Mill, First Baptist Church, Ft. Ogelthorpe, Hickory Valley Retirement Home, Creekside at Shallowford and Alexian Village. We are sure to pick up additional events before the end of the year.

This is the first time Lamar has been Business Manager in 3 years or so and remembers the last time he had the position. The Chorus performed for twenty

two clients, too much activity the members said at the time. The three largest audiences we have sung for were the 86<sup>th</sup> Black Hawk Infantry Division and the 449<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group Reunions and a TVA Division party. Each of these was over 500 in attendance.

## Profile of a Member

Chuck Wilson was born in Kingsport, Tennessee on May 20, 1952. He moved to South Pittsburg in 1965, and then to Chattanooga in 1968. He graduated from Chattanooga (City) High in 1970, and attended UTC from the fall of 1970 to the fall of 1971. He attended Chattanooga State off-and-on in the late 1970s. Chuck and Melissa were married on October 21, 1983.

Chuck started singing in church and youth choirs in 1968. While at Chattanooga State in the mid-70s, he sang with their chorus, and as it so happened, there were four guys (not *that* quartet!) who could sing barbershop. They put together three songs and sang them as part of the chorus package.

Chuck visited the Choo-Choo Chorus once, when Charley Stanbery was director, and was encouraged

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. Gandy Dancers this quarter include Lebron Brock, Beau Christian, Lucien Claiborne, Wally Edmondson, Steve Milling, Dave Rack, Dave White and Chuck Wilson.

*(Continued from page 1)*

and asked to join. Much to his regret, it was 20 years before he did join.

One night about 17-18 years ago at chorus rehearsal, someone pointed to Barry Owens and said "You", pointed to Dave Abercrombie and said "You", to me and Clarence Wall and said "You and you, come up here and sing." We sang "Wait 'Till the Sun Shines, Nellie", and had a decent blend.

We decided to meet again, and the rest is history. Classic Harmony has had the same four members longer than any other quartet in the chapter. We did Singing Valentines before the Chapter did, and have sung the National Anthem at Mocs basketball and Lookouts Baseball games.

For one Valentine, we were hired by an eight-month-pregnant lady to sing for her lawyer husband in Bankruptcy Court. She met us there and had a bailiff escort us into the court in front of a court full of people with sour expressions filing for bankruptcy. While we sang, the husband took one of the roses she gave him, put it between his teeth and danced her around!

In the late 90s there was only one director, and as a

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 5, No 3  
Third Quarter 2009

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result the chorus had to turn down some engagements when the director was not available. Chuck had long been interested in directing, so he asked to be an assistant/associate to the director.

Chuck attended Harmony College/Director's College for three years (2000-2), and earned a Certified Chorus Director's certificate from the Society.

Chuck was choir director at Northminster Presbyterian for a while, and will fill in for the director at First Baptist Church, Ft. Oglethorpe, when needed.

In 2007, Favorite Markets, his employer for 24 years, was sold to Mapco, and his position as an Internal Auditor was contracted out-of-house. He took that opportunity to go back to school, and after 6 years of off-and-on college study will get an associate degree this December.



Outdoor sing out at Bluebird Hollow Farm Pavilion. Photograph by Linda Toups. Used with permission.





Sing out for Grove Level Baptists Church showing chorus and about half of the audience.

#### Officers and Leaders for 2009

President	Lebron Brock	903-0005	lbrock2020@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Johnny Jackson	892-8317	choochoobari@comcast.net
Secretary	Fred Jesse	706-375-5935	tenorguytoo@comcast.net
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Paul Blazek directing the audience at Life Care of East Ridge in *God Bless America*.

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
310 East 8th Street  
Chattanooga, TN 37403



# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 5, No 4, Fourth Quarter 2009



The Chattanooga Christmas Show held in the GPS Auditorium, Paul Blazek, directing, with the largest Chattanooga and Cleveland Community Christmas Chorus to date (72 men--not all shown.) Photograph by Tim Beinke

## The Christmas Season 2009

Every year I look forward to our Christmas Season. As one of our songs says, *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*. There is great spirit in the chorus due in large part to the men who join with us to sing the secular music of the season and the sacred music telling the story of the coming of Jesus, the reason for the season.

This year we had the largest and most enthusiastic Cleveland and Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus (CCCCC) who sang not only at the main Cleveland and Chattanooga shows, but who joined us for sing outs as shown in photographs in this issue.

Our thanks to the following men from the community who are not members of either the Cleveland or Chattanooga choruses for making 2009 such a success; Douglas Alexander, Bryan Brown, Pete Snyder, Marty Massengale, Jerry Moore, Perry Vandergriff, Wendell Whitmire, Gene Huelman, Alvin Huffine, Irby Harley, Carl Streibeck, Ed Jackrison, Mick Larson, Henry Crutcher, Henry Lynn, Charlie Holder, Daniel Beeler, Dave Cadwell, David Littell, JJ McShane, James Correll, Ron Noles, Wayne Guffey, Richard Poole, Marcellus Scott and Kevin Myers.

Gary Fisher did a terrific job as Christmas Show Chairman. Here is what he said about it:

"I want to express my sincere thanks to all those who sang in *The Gifts of Christmas* on December 11th in the GPS auditorium which was a great venue. I consider it a stroke of genius on my part to ask Jed Mescon to be our emcee. I think he has earned a permanent job! It was, in my opinion, one of the best shows the Choo Choo Chorus and Community Chorus has ever done. The singing was great, the camaraderie most excellent, and we had a GREAT audience.

But I would be remiss if I didn't make special thanks to the following people for making this program a complete success:

1) Wally (Wall-E) for his tireless effort to keep track of ticket sales...SUPER JOB!

2) Frank Delaney for his Superman effort on ad sales.

3) My fellow Chattanooga guys quarteters - Wally, Dave and Beau for making this the most fun I've ever had since the hogs ate my kid brother.

4) Paul "That note is higher than you think" Blazek for the job he did on the program and, of course, his

seemingly insurmountable task of attempting to blend 70 voices into one cohesive entertaining tune.

5) Johnny Jackson, who made an unbelievable appearance after the loss he had suffered just a day earlier. He had to go shopping at Sams just to find clothes ("black pants, shoes and socks, white shirt, Christmas tie and clean underwear") to come to the show.

6) Dave Rack, who has agreed to struggle with those not-light risers, pulling the trailer behind his truck and trying to back it into tight spaces. Slow down, Dave, you're not 30 any more.

7) And I save my very special thanks to Steve Wixson. Is there anything this man can't do with cardboard and a can of paint? He put more hours into the success of this program than everybody else combined. Thank you, Steve...you shall have a special star in your crown in heaven!"

The audience gave us our biggest applause with 10 seconds of silence after we sang, *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.)* Thank you audience for the feedback. They'll be back next year!

We also had the largest turnout for the Christmas Party held at our home. With an expected large crowd, we set up grazing stations with waldorf salad, the perennial favorite slow cooked beef and corn beef brisquets, chicken and artichoke casserole, marinated vegetables and desserts prepared by CCCCC member, Douglas Alexander, who is a baker by trade. Then there was my surprise version of Breanna of New Orleans' Strawberries Fitzgerald cooked and almost flamed and poured over ice cream.

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

Choo Choo Chorus, Chattanooga, TN  
Volume 5, No 4  
Fourth Quarter 2009

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Paul Blazek and Chuck Wilson were present gifts from the chorus. Officers for 2010 (listed on Page 5) were installed by Paul Blazek. Paul thanked the CCCCCers for their work this year. We sang several of our CCCCC songs to our wives (see photograph) who were also recognized for letting their man sing. There was a bit of quarteting after that. *Steve Wixson*

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter; Paul Blazek (another who really loves it and kept it for 3 weeks), Wally Edmondson, Lamar Owens, Dave Rack, Art Southerlin and Dave White.



The Cleveland Christmas Show held in the Dixon Center on Lee University Campus, Chad Guyton, directing. Photograph by Tanya Fleury





The Choo Choo Chorus performing alone at the Chattanooga Christmas Show. Photograph by Abbie Hanson



The CCCCC closes sing out at First Baptist Church, Ft. Oglethorpe with Silent Night. Photograph by Melissa Wilson



The Choo Choo Chorus and Christmas guests at the sing out for Creekside Retirement Center. Photograph by Guelda Malone



Another photo from the Creekside sing out showing some of our wives (in the right foreground) who support our singing by letting us have our Monday nights out, coming to hear us sing and supporting us as the Choo Choo Belles.  
Photograph by resident Bill Allen





Alexian Village sing out, the last for the Chattanooga Community Christmas Chorus for 2009. This is a photograph from one of the televisions that are in all residents rooms and various places. There was a full house of people dressed in Christmas colors who listened to us live plus who knows how many others saw us on television. Photograph by Tanya Fleury.

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The Choo Choo Chorus and guests performing as part of the Choo Choo Hotels' 100 Anniversary Celebration. Photograph by Linda Moore.



Members and guests serenading wives at the Christmas party. Photograph by Steve Wixson

Chattanooga Chapter  
Barbershop Harmony Society  
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# CHOO CHOO TAG RAG

A Quarterly Newsletter of the **Choo Choo Chorus**

Volume 6, No 2, Second Quarter 2010



Chapter Retreat attendees from the left, Coach Larry Deters, Art Southerlin, Frank Delaney, Dave Rack, Johnny Jackson, Charlie Holder, Beau Christian, Wilbur Strickland, Wally Edmondson, Steve Grubb, Dave Fleury, Director Paul Blazek, Associate Director Chuck Wilson, Gary Fisher, Lebron Brock and Steve Wixson. Not shown is Marcellus Scott.

## Chapter Retreat on Monteagle Mountain

A total of 16 men attended the first retreat the Chorus has done in more than five years at St. Mary's of Sewanee atop beautiful Monteagle Mountain, June 18th and 19th. Although it was an exhausting twelve hours of singing, each and every one of us that attended came out of it knowing we are now far better singers than we were before we went up. Larry Deters, a contest singing judge, put us through the paces, giving extremely valuable tips on articulation, breathing, vowel formation and, most importantly, learning how to blend our voices into one cohesive, entertaining sound. He was not easy on Paul either because our esteemed director was also there to learn.

One of our exercises had each section stand in opposite corners of our large room and start singing a song as we moved to the center, continually mingling with each other as we sang. Singing next to a different voice provided a useful experience as we learned to HEAR each other. Sometimes you found a "sweet spot" and tended to just stay there, but other guys would keep moving and you had to move with

them.

There is no question that this 'Gang of Sixteen' drove back down the mountain tired, but energized with what we learned while we were up there. It would have been great to have at least ten more men, but those unfortunate ones who did not attend can count on each of those of us who did, to be more than willing to pass on our new found knowledge of music.

While the learning of new techniques was educational, it was equally important that we 16 got to know each other even better. We visited, we laughed, we told jokes, we sang quartets together (Wally was very much in demand as he was the only tenor attending). The new choreography of *The Banana Boat Song* is going to be GREAT! All in all, it was a MOST excellent weekend.

The weather was very warm, the food was outstanding, the camaraderie superb and the music HOT. The next time we do this, however, it will not be in the middle of June, but in the fall or early spring.

*Gary Fisher*

## Profile of a Member

Gary Fisher was born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, until he was 12 when the family picked up and moved to a farm just west of Adel, where he graduated high school in 1961. He entered Iowa State University in fall of that year, with a double major in Telecommunicative Arts and Journalism. He dropped out of ISU in 1965 to get married and got a job with WHO-TV as a cameraman. His son, Scott, was born in 1969 with a severe birth defect called spina bifida. Within three years he was promoted to Production Manager and built a strong production department where clients from as far away as Chicago would come to produce their commercials. Gary has been a prolific writer with over 5,000 commercials, public service announcements, and news productions over his 45 year professional career.

He moved to Naples, Florida in 1976 to become Production Manager of a cable television company, later moving back to Des Moines to become Community Director of the CBS affiliate station creating commercials for a wide variety of clients. Now divorced and tired of cold and snow, he moved back to Florida

He moved to Chattanooga in 1983, where he and Marilyn got married. He landed a job as writer, producer, director for WDSI, later promoted to Program Director, staying there for five years when he took a position at Memorial Hospital in their television production department. While there he finished his bachelors degree at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and started work on a master's degree in hospital administration which he got in 1992.

But video production always remained his first love and he left Memorial to become Media Services Director at Chattanooga State Community College. He retired from there in December, 2009.

Along the way, Gary and Marilyn had a daughter Sarah, now 18 and attending Chattanooga State in the Criminal Justice program where she hopes to become an animal resources officer. Gary and Marilyn have a retirement home in the Clifftops gated community on Monteagle Mountain where they will move within the next couple of years.

Gary came to the Choo Choo Chorus in 2005 when he was invited to participate in the Community Chorus for the Christmas show. He enjoyed it so much that he stayed on and has attended every contest since then. He has been the Program VP and now holds the Treasurer's post, insisting it is not a "for life" appointment. He started out as a bass, tried lead for a few rehearsals, saw the error of his ways and rejoined the "most excellent bass section". He started the *Chattanoogaquys* quartet which originally had Ron Satterfield and then Niles Fowler as tenors and Landon Sawyer as lead. The group now consists of Beau Christian

## Choo Choo Tag Rag

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(Bari), David Fleury as lead, Wally Edmonson as tenor and Gary as bass. They are hard at work trying to get a repertoire together for sing outs and other singing gigs.

A little known fact about Gary...he announced professional wrestling matches for several years in Des Moines and has also held part time positions as a disc jockey for three different radio stations.

## Gandy Dancers for the Quarter

The Gandy Dancer Award is passed from member to member for service to the Chapter. This quarter the Gandy went to Beau Christian, Gary Fisher, Marcus Scott, Wally Edmondson, Steve Wixson, Brooks Gist, and Tom Keegan.

## Chapter Chosen for TAG Program

The Chattanooga chapter was recently privileged to be chosen by Society Headquarters along with a few other chapters to participate in a six week program called the TAG (techniques for accelerated growth) program. The TAG program is the initiative the Society hopes will reverse the downward trend in Society membership. If it is successful in the test chapters it will be promoted for all chapters of the Society. The key element in the TAG program is the CACM (Compellingly Attractive Chapter Meeting) plan designed by Chuck Greene. The plan is designed to attract and keep more members, especially younger members. The pretext is that our organization like all other similar groups must change as society changes to better meet the needs and mesh with the life style of today's young men. This plan promises to also make chapter meetings more entertaining and fun for everyone. We are adopting the CACM concept and next quarter there will be results to report. *Lebron Brock*





## Scout Flag Day Sing Out

The Saturday before Memorial Day well over 1000 Scouts, leaders, and parents gathered at the Chattanooga National Cemetery to honor deceased veterans. In just a little over one hour over 46,000 American

flags were placed at the headstones.

Prior to placing flags, a ceremony was held where we sang the National Anthem and God Bless America. At the Memorial Day Ceremony, we again sang the National Anthem, and at closing, God Bless America. Photograph by Steve Wixson.

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## Chapter Retreat Photographs



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