



# The Chordsmen Chronicle



www.funcenterchordsmen.com

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Volume 34 Issue 4

## Mathey's Minute ~ improving your singing technique

Reprinted with permission, from the March issue of the Voices of Harmony bulletin, "Vocal Type" Phil Schwan editor



R.D. Mathey

My skill level in singing technique has to do with how I perceive my own singing voice. I teach according to how I personally "sense" sound and focus of tone.

I continue to stress singing the way I perceive singing technique. My singing technique has to do with focus of tone in the mask (masque), facial and diaphragmatic support, and the handling of the three male voices: chest, head and falsetto.

Why do I continually stop and start in the rehearsal setting? I keep saying the same things again and again, almost ad


nauseam. What makes me smile is: I never tire of doing this. WHY? Because I'm always amazed that the suggestions I usually render prove, for the most part, to be on target. What becomes a concern is a lack of retention of our members from week to week.

Is it lack of communication on the part of the director or is it lack of the singer thinking and making adjustments in their singing techniques, and then forgetting what they did to make the sound acceptable? The answer is probably both.

Under pitch singing seems to be the bane of most barbershop chapters. Why is this so? In my opinion it's because this American art form is the most difficult of the choral mediums. The demands of what we in choral music call

"voicing" is much more difficult in this medium than the so called classical choirs. Voicing is everything. So we deal with it. Voicing is how the chords are vertically arranged.

If I, as the director, have patience, you as chorus members must also display patience. Having stated this, read the following and do your best to make singing adjustments. Listen to your voice and try to make adjustments. Better still, if you make an adjustment in your singing technique that is an improvement, do your best to maintain this improvement.

There are no magic buttons to press when singing. The things that enable the singer to best sing in tune is a matter of hearing, supporting, thinking and energizing. 

## Staying in Tune ~ Four Steps to Remember

**HEARING** is about concentration and being aware of your sound. When I was on a Leave of Absence from BGSU in 1977-78, I spent the year studying voice and German Lieder in Germany. After several lessons with my German teacher, I was stunned when I recorded myself and found I was singing flat. I sensed I was under pitch and upon recording myself I found that I was. How did I make the adjustment? By **arching** the sound. **Arching** the sound would flip the tone high into the nasal cavity (with the *velum* closed-or partially closed) and with enough air (support) to keep the sound alive and vital. It is this **arching** that we need to better understand.

**SUPPORTING** The diaphragm is that band around your belly button that enables you to energize air flow. The problem with this gut muscle is that when singing flat, this muscle exacerbates the problem. This means that one has to mentally know when they are singing under pitch.

**THINKING** Are you really thinking when you sing? As I demonstrate line and tone, I always sense a bit of fatigue because of the concentration I place into every sound I make. I am totally aware of what is coming out of my mouth. Not because I'm a so called professional singer but because I refuse to sing under pitch. Concentration is a must in this hobby.

**ENERGIZING** This has to do with the inner soul of each man. Can you excite yourself by singing a chord or a poetic line that literally thrills you to do so? Energizing has to do with release of air flow from the lungs and how you support the tone. Facial and diaphragmatic support are part of this energizing factor. Learn to better feel the exhilaration of taking a deep breath. Give yourself a goose bump when breathing. If you can learn to do this (and it is a learned physical thing) you will be more on target with energizing the tone.

## *FCC to determine if they have “Quiet Strength”*

By: Tom Webb ~ Lead



Tom Webb

I just finished reading an excellent book titled, “Quiet Strength” by Tony Dungy, coach of the Super Bowl winning Indianapolis Colts. It is a great read for anyone, regardless of whether they are sports fans or not. In it he discusses the principles and practices he espoused as a football coach on his way to winning football’s ultimate trophy.

A man of great faith, Tony Dungy leads quietly, emphasizing basic principles of hard work, attention to details and mastery of the fundamentals of football. In his first head coaching job with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers he tells of his first team meeting in which he outlined the basic tenets that he says “would become our hallmarks”. They are as follows:

- Top five in the NFL in giveaway/takeaway ratio
- Top five in the NFL in fewest penalties
- Top five in overall special teams
- Make big plays
- Don’t give up big plays

Pretty basic football principles wouldn’t you say.? Tony goes on by stating , “I learned that it doesn’t matter how you win. You play to your team’s strengths, whether it is on offense, defense or special teams. I believe the best way to achieve success in each of these three areas is by attention to detail and a commitment to the fundamentals- doing the ordinary things better than anyone else.”

He goes on to say that he told his team that they would

live and play by the concept “Whatever it takes,” And posted a second phrase in their locker room, “No excuses, no explanations.” These two phrases and one other, “Do what we do”, would be repeated throughout the book.


So what does all of this have to do with a bunch of ordinary guys getting together to sing ? Quite a bit I’d say, if we are to improve as a chorus. Having clearly defined goals , or tenets, is a start. Do we have what it takes to be a “top five” chorus? Are we willing to do “Whatever it takes” to get there?

Is it possible for a group of men, many of us who are, shall we say , fairly long in the tooth to commit ourselves to “doing the ordinary better than anyone else”? Can we “Do what we do” without excuses or explanations and achieve success as a chorus?

These are some pretty tough questions for a number of us I’m sure, including myself. In this busy world of ours, it’s tough to focus on one aspect of our lives when we are pulled in a hundred different directions. Being on the back nine of life myself the once finely tuned body (ha!) isn’t what it used to be, and the memory, well that’s the second thing that goes (I don’t remember what the first thing is).

I’m just not sure if I’ve got what it takes to do whatever it takes, but I’m in there trying. You know, in the two years that I’ve been a member of this chorus, we have gotten better. We have improved substantially, when you get right down to it, and many of us are probably singing better than we’ve ever sung in our lives. So why not? What in the world do we have to lose, besides hair?

A certain artist who goes by the name of Michelangelo once said, “ The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is to high, and we miss it, but that it is too low and we hit it.” Food for thought.

Attention to detail and a commitment to the fundamentals- doing the ordinary better than anyone else, what ever it takes, no excuses , no explanations. That’s how we do what we do. 

## Another chord ringing, goose bump tag

### 69. To Reach The Unreachable Star (The Impossible Dream)

The musical score is presented in two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "To reach the un-reach-a-ble star". The score includes various musical notations such as chords, notes, and rests.

Burt Staffen, 1970

## Chordsmen finally understand about “sing above the hand”

By: Steve Kovach ~ Music Director



Steve Kovach

Have you ever watched the 80's TV show MacGyver? The show always put MacGyver in a life and death situation where he needed to use anything he could find around him to solve the problem.

A typical situation finds him having to use a paperclip, a can of compressed air and a basketball to stop a bomb from going off at the local elementary school.

He always saved the day!

So what? What does this have to do with us and our singing? I guess I'm asking you to be MacGyver and use what you have “around you“ to make yourself a better singer! Let's take a look at some of the pieces parts that you have right now that you may not be using to your advantage.

First we need to consider resonance—what is it and why do we need it? Resonance is the vibration of one or more structures related to the source of a sound. In voice, resonance relates to the quality of the voice produced (eg. hyponasal, hypernasal).

Uhhmm...OK. What does *that* mean? Well, basically, it is a vibration which creates sound. Many of you have heard me compare singing with resonance to an acoustic guitar. The acoustic guitar body is hollow and allows for air to move—therefore we get an amplified and resonant sound.

If we took the same guitar strings and attached them to a 2x4, the sound would not be the same. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't sound very good at all. We need to be more like that guitar and take advantage of all the resonating sound that we can potentially create.

This is what we're all about as barbershop singers—a good resonating sound. How do we effectively create resonance? The answer is in your face. Take a look at the following two pictures. They are a front and side view of your sinuses:

Figure (a) shows the front view of the sinuses. Take a look at the cavity above the eyebrows! Did you know that there is space there? Raising the eyebrows gives us an outer/facial representation of singing directly into the frontal sinus cavities. Also notice that the frontal sinuses are within the bone of the skull.

Because of this, there is an additional benefit—the sinus and the bone together create an opportunity for tremendous resonance! Now, look at the area under the eyes in figure (a). These are the largest cavities we have and will give us the most resonance as we sing.

Look at this same area in figure (b). You can see just how large these cavities are. Consider how much of your sound is missing if you do not incorporate them into your singing mechanism.

Think about what happens when I ask you to put your hand flat under your nose while you “sing above the hand.” Look where the focus is in this exercise--it is focused right in these large sinuses.

So, guys...use everything that you've been given. We're not talking about defusing a bomb with a paper clip and piece of dust. We're simply talking about singing toward your sinuses and resonating the heck out of them! If you do that, you will automatically have a better sound. 🎵

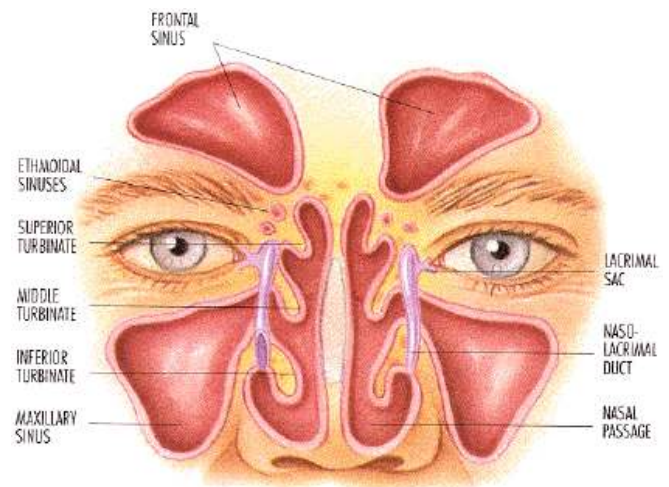


Fig. A

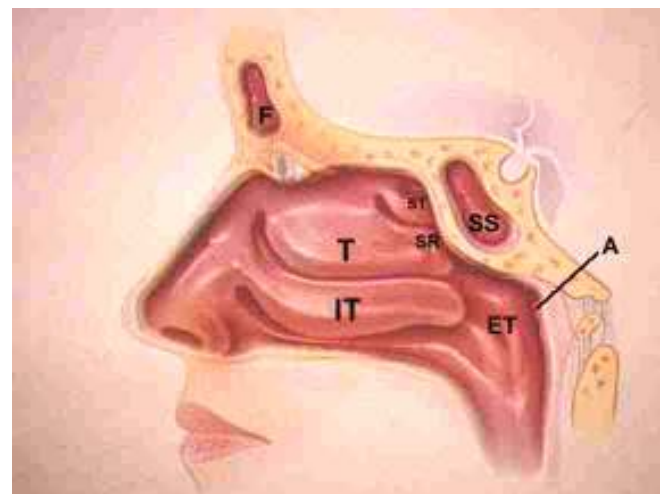


Fig. B

## Notes and "quotes"

By: Bob Crow ~ VP Music and Performance



Bob Crowl


The run up to our show time seemed like a long way off when we began working on the music back at the first of the year. Here we are at the end of March with a little over a month to go. Our audit process is nearly complete with only two numbers to finish up the show repertoire.

You may remember, I have said that my two favorite times of the year are when we are learning our show music and when we are in the prep time for contest. This is when we can learn to be better at our craft. Steve's hard work and patience is bringing our chorus to a higher level of vocal production. It is up to each of us to maintain that NEW level and continue to move on.

During warm up time at Monday rehearsal, Trevor has reminded us many times that we have two ears and one mouth. It is vitally important that we listen to those around us as we sing. The unique sound of our music has no heroes, only those that blend together so that the listener cannot tell who is singing what. When we can make that happen, our audience is hearing good music.

I have always wanted to record one of our show tunes the first time the chorus has tried to sing it and chronicle the progress as we make it our own. The past few weeks, we have added some sectionals that have paid huge dividends. The learning process is never easy, but knowing that end result will be really great is a wonderful stimulus to spend the effort and time to get this music off paper.

Each year, our music committee has picked music at a higher level than the previous year to challenge the Chordsmen to a higher level of performance. **R.F. Miller** has done a great job with getting our web site loaded with learning tracks to help the long process of getting new music off paper.

I hope each of you have noticed that it is when we have the tunes off paper that we can really start to hone these numbers and get them show ready. I know this is the point that Steve really enjoys as he starts to rev us up and get these songs going. Our job is to give him back the tremendous energy he brings to us each Monday. Sounds easy, right? Well, try doing it for 2 ½ hours, and I can assure you that you will end the evening knowing you have worked hard, but you will feel great. You will also know that you "Got-R-Done." 

## Section leaders look for the perfect score in tape audit reviews

By: Rusty Cates ~ Lead Section Leader



Rusty Cates

The section leaders were given an additional duty a few years ago. They were asked to review audit tapes for their particular voice part. I have reviewed my share and then some, of these audit tapes, and thank goodness **Frank Kovach** has taken on his share of the tape review.

The members who turn in their cassettes and get them back should be aware of the time involved in the review process. For me, usually eight to ten minutes per song. Multiply that over a large lead section, and you're talking a good two hours or so.

When I pop a cassette into the player, I expect it to be a perfect "1." As you are aware this is not always the case. So instead, I listen and observe mistakes, and have to start jotting down corrections. Later those corrections will need to be typed up or neatly written to hand back to the singer. And because you received a "2" or "3" I know that soon I'll be having to repeat the process all over again.

Please be ready on audit night to get a perfect score. Life would be so much easier for everyone involved. If you are not sure about the words or notes call, e-mail or ask someone that can help you. The audit process should be your chance to show the chorus that you are worthy of climbing on the risers, and calling yourself a member of the Fun Center Chordsmen.

I would encourage you to listen again to your tapes and judge the performance for yourself. Analyze the recording by asking, "Am I a better singer than I was a few years ago?" What would your family say if they listened to the tape? Would they be impressed with your development?

Using a math analogy, I believe we still have singers content to add 2 + 2. They have stayed at simple arithmetic for years, while others in the chorus have moved on to long division, and calculus. Wouldn't it be great to see all 40 men show up for rehearsal every week ready to prove they are the "top dog" in the chorus, instead of arriving as the Chihuahua who tries to hide behind the German Shepherd.

***If you think you can,  
or if you think you can't,  
either way, you're right!***

## Membership is about having fun

By: Joe Dove ~ VP Chapter Development



Joe dove

The annual show is upon us once again. We enjoyed the 2007 show and we had many good compliments on our performance. What caused this to happen. Simple, we were ready with the notes and words.

The music team once again has chosen some excellent music. Our Monday nights together are now more productive and so is the enjoyment of our hobby. Oh did I say HOBBY, I really meant enjoying the time and effort we spend together polishing our craft.

Steve is working hard to polish our performance. We are all learning together and I for one am enjoying the ride. Rusty once again is producing another tremendous script. The flyers are out, the tickets are at our disposal, and the hall is rented. Now its up to the members "To Get-R-Done."

Lately, the membership numbers have been going in the wrong direction. Sometimes due to reasons beyond our control. Health, work, and family obligations have reduced our numbers. However, the visitors that have been coming show a positive trend as they are joining us and that is the bright side of our development.

We're involved in a hobby that is a very rewarding and up lifting segment of our daily lives. When I was under the weather and all I could do was listen and watch (and mark up my music) I could tell that were you were having FUN and you showed it. Smiles are catching and Steve would like us to catch more and more of them and reveal them to him as he stands before us.

The short little mind benders Steve comes up with to get us to sing better, should be written down for posterity. We all get a chuckle on how his mind works.

Show time is an excellent time to be inviting prospects for a visit. From the selling of ads to the selling of tickets, just look them in the eye and invite them to join us in the fun.

The workings of putting on the big show have all the opportunities we need to invite the guys to join us. So all I can say is keep it in the front of your thoughts as we go about the day. SELL, SELL the tickets, yourself and the chorus.

Time flies when we're having fun and before we know it we will be saying that WAS a really good show. 🎵

## Quartet Corner

### Bravada lead singer still recuperating from surgery

By: R.F. Miller ~ Bravada Bari

**Bravada** is a very active quartet and when the lead singer is temporarily out of action, we had to again look in the phone book for a "Rent-a-Lead." And thanks goodness, our **Home Edition** friend, **Jerry Starrett** has been there for us.

On Saturday, March 15, we were asked to sing at a "Baby Shower" and this was a first for **Bravada**. It was at the request of **Tim Brandt's** friend **Tina McDaniel** for Tina's sister **Robin Black**.



Bravada sings at the baby shower

So with Jerry on lead and after a quick warm-up, we met in the conference room of Sluss Realty and sang a few songs to the delight of those in attendance.

Then on Saturday, March 22 **Bravada** was booked to entertain at the Richland County Cattlemen's Association annual recognition dinner. It was held in the John Hartz building on the fair grounds.

We met at Tim's office and ran through the list of songs we were going to sing. And then, just for kicks and grins, we tried "It's a Brand New Day." And much to our surprise, it went really well. So we agreed that we would end our performance that night with this song. We wanted to get a taste of performing it in front of a live audience.

The folks at the banquet enjoyed our singing as well as the "true stories" we told. There was one young boy, I'd guess about three or four, that put his hands over his ears on our first song. We had to determine if he thought our singing was really bad, or it was just too much noise for him. All through the performance, he tried his hands, Styrofoam dishes, and finally plastic cups over his ears to block the sound.

As usual, Jerry did a super job filling in for our ailing lead, **Lee Hull**. And until Lee is ready to rejoin us, Jerry has agreed to sing with us for three more gigs.

Thanks, Jerry, it's always a pleasure to sing with you. Isn't it great that Home Edition and Bravada can swap singers when needed? 🎵

# The Craft Shop

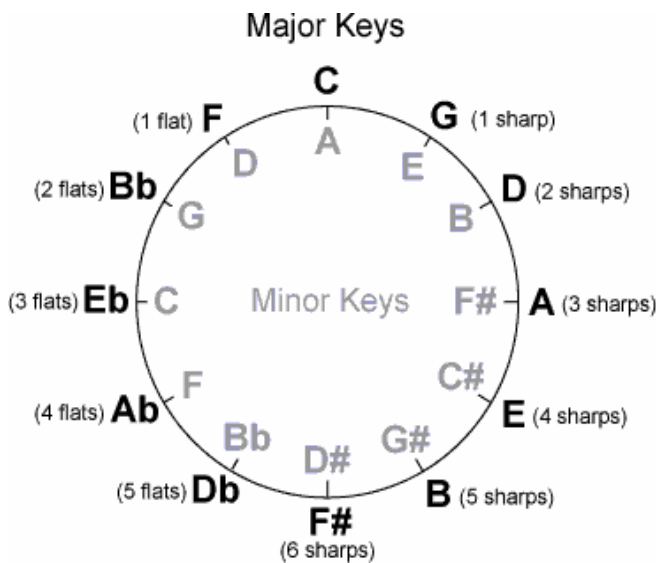
## *The Circle of Fifths is a good learning tool*

The Circle of Fifths is an easy way to find out the key signature of a song. Or what key the song is written in. The Circle of Fifths tells you how many sharps or flats are in a given key.

The key of C has no sharps or flats. It is called the Circle of Fifths because as you go clockwise you go up a fifth. For example, the fifth note of the C major scale is G. The fifth note of the G major scale is D, and so on.

In other words, as you go clockwise each successive note is a fifth above the previous note. As you go counter-clockwise, each note is a fifth below the previous note.

It is also true that as you go clockwise each note is a fourth down from the previous note, and as you go counter-clockwise each note is a fourth above the previous note.



The internal relationship that makes this possible is the fact that going up a fifth and down a fourth brings you to the same letter note (though in a different octave). For instance going up a fifth from C brings you to a G and going down a fourth from the same C brings you also to G, but an octave down.

Notice how there are 12 notes corresponding to 12 numbers on a clock.

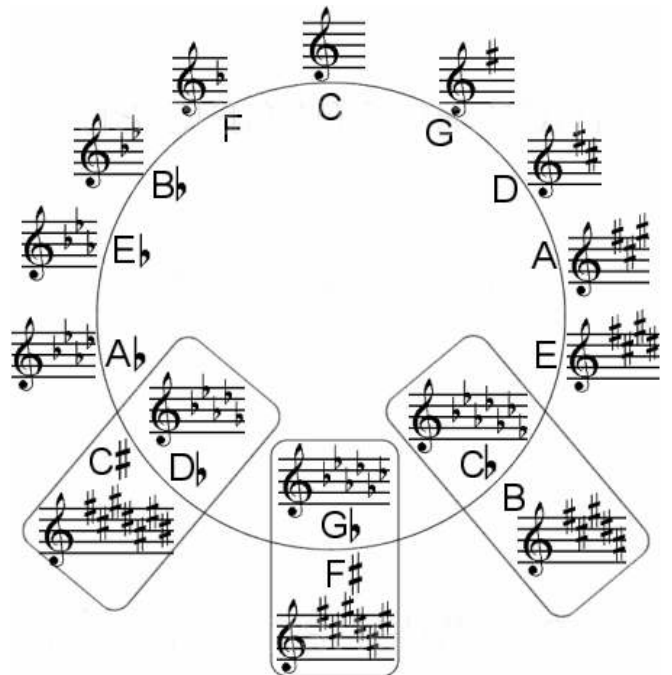
C is in the 12 noon position. G is in the 1 o'clock position and has 1 sharp. F is in the 11 o'clock position with 1 flat. D is in the two o'clock position and likewise has 2 sharps; (F and C. )

A is in the 3 o'clock position with 3 sharps; (F, C, G.) E is in the four o'clock position and has 4 sharps (F, C, G, D). B is in the 5 o'clock position and has 5 sharps (F,C,G,D,A). F# is in the 6 o'clock position and has 6 sharps (F,C,G,D,A,E)

As you can see the key of A has 3 sharps, and the key of Db has 5 flats. But how do you remember which notes are the flats and sharps?

If you always start at Bb and move counterclockwise you will get the flats in order. For instance in the key of Ab (4 flats) the flats in the key signature are Bb, Eb, Ab, and Db. Count Bb as 1 (the first flat) and continue counting counter clockwise to 4 (The fourth flat)

If you start at F (which is right next to Bb, the starting point for the flats) and move clockwise you will get the sharps in order. For instance the sharps in the key of A are F#, C#, and G#. ♪



## *Points to ponder*

*An editorial  
By R.F. Miller - Editor*

### *The importance of one man*



The Fun Center Chordsmen is a chorus made up of many men. Each man is an individual and important to the collective group.

Each and every man is important to the overall success of the chorus. But how important is just one man?

Let me site an example. We all know **Lee Hull**, a member of this chorus for more than 15 years. Lee sings lead and is one of many leads in the chorus. He has been faithful in his attendance and rarely, if ever, misses a performance or rehearsal. He quietly goes about the business of singing barbershop.

In the fall of 2000 I was really excited about being a new barbershopper and especially about being a baritone. And I truly wanted to sing in a quartet. So I began to look for three other parts. I talked with a lot of the members of the chorus during Monday night rehearsals. I got to know **Lee Hull**. He always demonstrated a positive attitude and had a smile on his face.

He was the first person I asked "Do you want to sing in a quartet." His enthusiastic response left no doubt. So we had a lead and a bari and we needed a bass. **Bob Crowl** and I have sung in the church choir together for a number of years and I knew he could sing bass. He too jumped at the chance to sing in a quartet.

And finally after several tries, we were fortunate to obtain **Tim Brandt** for the tenor part. He was an actor in the 2001 show and a new barbershopper. The quartet was now complete.

How important is one man? We've been asked several times "How many in your quartet." There have been four until recently. Lee has had major surgery and is still mending. What is a quartet without one of the parts. That's the importance of one man. (Thank you **Jerry Starrett** for filling in for Lee in his absence)

To my knowledge, Lee has never turned down an opportunity to sing with Bravada be it for rehearsal or a performance. There have been times in the past when Lee would work all night and then go with Bravada to a YIH presentation in early morning.

Lee is only one man but his presence in the quartet is vital. The importance of one man should never be overlooked. Hurry back Lee, we miss you!

New Member	Sponsor	Man of Note #
Tom Hoover	Rusty Cates	5
Lorin Weaver	Walt Jewett	1

**When will your name appear here?**

### *Ambassador of Song honor roll*

**R.F. Miller  
Ed Hoffmann  
Lee Cook  
Walt Jewett  
Chris Rumas**

**Dave Kracker  
Mike Craze  
Dan Strader  
Joe Dove  
Bruce VanHesteren**

*If you become an Ambassador of Song by filling out the application and mailing it in, please let the editor know so your name can be included here.*

### *April Birthdays*

- **Rusty Cates ~ April 4**
- **Harold Eckert ~ April 16**
- **Terry Loughman ~ April 16**
- **Roger Humbert ~ April 17**
- **R.F. Miller ~ April 25**



## *Chordsmen Quartets*



### Home Edition

**John Maurer (T)** (419) 289-3635 (Contact)  
**Jerry Starrett (L)**  
**Bill Herdman (B)**  
**Dave Kracker (Br)**

### Bravada

**Tim Brandt (T)**  
**Lee Hull (L)**  
**Bob Crowl (B)**  
**R.F. Miller (Br)** (419) 884-2441 (Contact)

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*Harmony for  
life...*

**The Fun Center Chordsmen**  
*Mansfield's Barbershop*  
*Harmony Chorus*  
www.funcenterchordsmen.com

We meet every Monday night at 7:00 PM at the First Congregational Church, 640 Millsboro Rd. (corner of Marion Ave. and Millsboro Rd) in Mansfield.

*Visitors and guests are always welcome*

## Special Performances and Noteworthy Events for 2008



- ◆ **Date:** Saturday May 3  
**Time:** All day  
**Event:** FCC Annual show  
**Location:** Renaissance Theatre
- ◆ **Date:** Monday May 19  
**Time:** Meet 6:30 Sing 7:00  
**Event:** Chordsmen Salute to Veterans  
**Location:** 1st Congo  
**Uniform:** Black with Red FCC Logo
- ◆ **Date:** Monday May 26  
**Time:** Meet 10:00 Sing 11:00  
**Event:** Memorial Day Service  
**Location:** Mansfield Cemetery  
**Uniform:** Black with Red FCC Logo
- ◆ **Date:** Thursday thru Saturday June 12-14  
**Time:** All day  
**Event:** Apple Corps Music Camp 2008  
**Location:** Kenyon College

◆ **Date:** Thursday June 19  
**Time:** Meet 7:00 Sing 8:00  
**Event:** Brookside Park in Ashland  
**Uniform:** Black with Red FCC Logo

◆ **Date:** Monday June 23  
**Time:** Meet 6:00 Sing 7:00  
**Event:** Bicentennial Sister Cities Celebration  
**Location:** Holiday Inn  
**Uniform:** Black with White Long Sleeve shirt, Red Vest and black bow tie.

◆ **Date:** Thursday July 17  
**Time:** Meet 6:15 Sing at 7:00  
**Event:** Crestline Gazebo entertainment  
**Location:** Gazebo in Crestline  
**Uniform:** Black with Red FCC Logo  
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**NOTE: Uniform: Black = black shoes, black socks, black pants and black belt.**

Unless otherwise credited, all articles and photos are by R. F. Miller

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