



Celebrating 60 years of harmony!

2006, 2007 Illinois District  
Fifth Place Medalist Chorus  
and Plateau 4A Champions

# The C-U ReCHORDer

A monthly publication of the  
Champaign-Urbana, Illinois Chapter  
of the Barbershop Harmony Society

**May 2007**  
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## Statesmen repeat as Plateau 4A Champions!

It was another great weekend in Peoria for the Illini Statesmen at the Illinois District Spring Convention. We retained our title as Plateau 4A Champions, and finished in Fifth Place overall again. This was the first contest under our new district contest structure. We have now qualified to sing in the fall International Prelim contest. We aren't obligated to sing then, so we'll have to decide if we want to or not.

Our average score was virtually identical to our score last fall. This is significant because scores in the spring contest have historically been lower than in the fall contest. I'm by no means an expert, but I thought the scores for all the quartets over the weekend were a little low. I expect I would have thought the same for the choruses if I'd seen all of them. All of the choruses that finished ahead of us scored lower than they did last fall. So, we're continuing to gain on them. To give you some idea how much we've improved, five years ago the Illini Statesmen finished seventh in the spring, small-chorus contest with an average score of 53.2 and failed to qualify for the fall contest. This year, with all the big choruses in the contest, we finished fifth overall with an average score of 68.3. Give yourselves a pat on the back!

Roundabout did a fine job in the college contest,

### Snowbird returns with a song

By Jim Graham

It certainly was an honor and privilege to come back from Florida and be able to sing with the Illini Statesmen in contest. I am proud to be an Illini Statesman and my "buttons were bursting" after our performance. I received many fine comments from judges and other barbershoppers. One particular comment I will pass on was from Bob Cearnal, President of Belleville Chapter and gold medalist with the Ambassadors of Harmony: "Champaign-Urbana could not have sung those two songs any better."

finishing second. Unfortunately, we didn't have any quartets in the regular quartet contest. This is an area we need to work on. Our chapter has a history of producing good quartets, and quartet singers have contributed greatly to making our chorus better. The Carbondale Chapter has the same number of members on their roster as we do. They were able to put three quartets on stage for this contest. There's no reason we shouldn't be able to do the same. You don't have to be a great singer to be in a quartet. Being in a quartet will make you a better singer, and help improve our chorus. I urge each of you to consider singing in a quartet next fall. Use it as a learning experience and have fun.

The good news about the quartet contest was that there were 24 quartets in the regular contest, plus three college quartets and four high school quartets in their respective contests. We had two quartets achieve the qualifying score to compete in the international competition this summer. To qualify, quartets have to score an average of 76 or better. Alchemy, our 2003 Illinois District Champions, scored 76.6. Our other qualifier was a new quartet called Rush Street with an average score of 76.3.

### ReCHORDer finishes second

One final bit of news from the convention in Peoria. The results of the 2006 Illinois Bulletin Contest were announced and the ReCHORDer finished in second place. I wasn't expecting to place at all. I knew that this bulletin could be much better and more useful to the chapter. Now, with the judges' feedback in hand and an understanding of what the judging criteria are, I have every intention of winning the 2007 Illinois bulletin contest. You can all help by submitting articles, suggesting topics to cover, and continuing to be a great chapter. We've been doing a great job of keeping active as a chorus. Not only is it a lot of fun for all of us, but it gives me plenty to write about.

# Defending Champs!

By Lee Reifsteck, Director

Another great job at contest guys; once again, you made me proud to be your director. I was very pleased with the way we performed on stage. For the most part, we took what we did in practice and put it on the stage. That is the key, practice makes performance.

Terry Ludwig, director of the Bloomington chorus, had some very nice things to say as we walked backstage together. He commented that we might have beaten them. I told him we still had another two years of work ahead of us before that will happen. ☺

All in all, everyone I talked with had glowing things to say about what we are doing. It's easy to lose track of just where we are as a chapter. We are one of the best chapters in the state with many other chapters using us as a goal to strive for. Sometimes I forget that, because I am not satisfied with where we are. I am proud of what we have accomplished but not satisfied because I know we can do better. The comment I like most from the A&R session was from a presentation judge saying we had glimmers of an A performance. To score in the high B range, you have to have moments of an A level performance. Comparing our scores from the last contest, our average score was the same, a 68.3. [*ed note: last fall our score was 68.2*] Our highest average scoring last contest was music 70.5, our lowest average scoring this contest was music 64.0. The other categories were higher averages. Presentation went from 68.8 to 69.8 and singing was up from 65.5 to 71.0. I think the main cause for the lower music score was we went a full step flat on both songs. We will return to making this one of our highest priorities. We know we can do it, we just need to do it ALL THE TIME.

It was great having three new guys (Jordan, Nate, and Ray) join us for the first time on the contest stage for a total of 24 men on stage. That's five more than the last contest. Can we put more on stage for the next contest? That would be fantastic. Congratulations to Roundabout. They did a fantastic job on the contest stage finishing second. It was a fun weekend spent with good friends.

Deadline for next issue

May 27, 2007

## Roundabout places second in college contest

Representing the University of Illinois and Northern Illinois University, **Roundabout**, finished in second place in the Illinois District college quartet preliminary contest. **Brian Conrad**-tenor, **Matt Carlen**-lead, and **Jorden Brotherton**-baritone are all Illini Statesmen members and performed with us in the chorus contest.



**Roundabout** (L to R) Brian Conrad, Matt Carlen, Steve Dawson, Jorden Brotherton. (photo by Puddin Carlen)

Winners of the Illinois college quartet contest were The Aborigines from Illinois Wesleyan University. They will receive the automatic bid to the international competition. Roundabout performed well, and earned an average score of 57.4. Now they will have to wait to find out if they scored high enough to qualify for a wildcard bid to the international contest in Denver this summer.

To learn more about Roundabout, check out their website, [roundaboutquartet.com](http://roundaboutquartet.com)

### Overheard at contest

"Great job! You guys just cost me a free lunch. Our president said he would have bought me lunch if we had beaten Champaign." *Mike Drake, director, Springfield Land of Lincoln Chorus*

"The audience got quieter for you than for anyone else." *Don Deegan, former Illini Statesmen member*

"You just impressed the crap out of me." *Rich Hansen, baritone, Wound for Sound and Bloomington section leader*

"You guys always beat us." *Pete Hansen, director, Rockford Metro Second City Chorus*

## The Starting Line

By Kevin Swartz, President

This coming weekend I will be participating in the Indianapolis Mini-Marathon. We (35,000 of my closest running buddies and I) will be winding our way through the streets of downtown Indy as we make our way, elbow to elbow, out to the Brickyard. Then, after an unforgettable trip around the track of the Indy 500, we head back downtown to complete our 13.1 mile journey.

Once I cross the finish line, receiving my participation medal and numerous freebies, one would think that I had made it to the end of a 4-month long journey of endurance training. You would think it would be time for me to stop and reflect on the success of meeting my goal. In reality I consider it only a milestone. The next leg of this journey is to make it to the starting line of the Chicago Marathon in October. Crossing the finish line in Indy only marks the beginning of my training for the next five months.

The sport of endurance running has taught me several lessons I can apply to other areas of my life, including singing. Probably the single most important lesson has to do with competition. When I cross the finish line this weekend, odds are I won't be among the top ten runners. I don't expect to be among the top 100, top 1000, or even the top 10,000 runners. I'll probably finish somewhere among the top 20,000.

As I reach the halfway point in the race, running around the 2.5 mile oval of the Brickyard, I'll be able to watch the infield jumbotron as the news media interviews the winner of the race. Should I stop? Should I give up? The winner has already finished and I've still got six miles to go. The answer is, "No!" I've learned that I'm not competing against others. The only one that I'm competing with is me. The only one I need to compare myself to is me.

Just making it to the starting line makes me a winner in my book. I can take pride in knowing I had a desire to do something, and I had confidence enough in myself to put that desire into action. Finishing the race and knowing that I gave it my best effort is all the success I need. I know I won't be able to say I'm the "world's best runner," but, I know I can say, "I am a runner."

The same holds true for all areas of our lives, including singing. Just sitting around, wishing we could do something won't move us any closer to the starting line. We need to believe in ourselves and with self-confidence, do the best we can.

See you at the starting line.

## Contest and looking forward

By Matt Carlen, Program Vice President

Gentlemen, congrats on another wonderful contest, and let me say thanks for reminding me why I love this hobby. We are a chorus with endless upside and potential and I think that is the most exciting part of competing!

So now to look forward, please know that we will be taking attendance for rehearsal now. And now we will return to a more rigid schedule. Also, we will be planning another membership month due to the outstanding success of our last. Things are still going to be very exciting so please come to rehearsal **early and often!!!**

As for what our future holds I'm not exactly sure. I know some things will not change:

- We will continue our trips to Bunny's after rehearsal. (Now smoke free!) All members are encouraged to join in.
- We will continue to charge a \$1 late fee in "The Old Songs" jar.
- We will continue to plan more "Non-barbershop" gatherings for the chapter to provide a chance to foster our deep friendships.
- We will continue to ring chords -- not just as fellow barbershoppers, not just as Illini Statesmen, not just as a group of men combining for one common goal, but as friends.
- I will continue my vow to do everything in my power to make sure our meetings run smoothly and that the Illini Statesmen can continue to move toward whatever goals we set.

So what happens next is up to all of us. The world is our oyster! I don't know what's next, but I know I get more and more excited for it every Thursday night!

### Board meeting scheduled

Due to our contest preparations, no board meeting was held in April. The next board meeting will be—

Date: May 20, 2007

Time: 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Location: President Swartz's house,  
2403 Brookens Circle, Urbana

All chapter members are welcome to attend. Board members are expected to attend. Please send agenda items to Kevin at [president@illinistatesmen.org](mailto:president@illinistatesmen.org)

We are fortunate to have three new members that have joined the chapter in the last month. To help you get to know them better, here are some details about them.

**WELCOME!**  
**NEW MEMBERS**



**Ray Billman** (by Lee Reifsteck)

The Illini Statesmen are proud to welcome back a former member, Ray Billman. Ray has a beautiful lead voice and has been singing and performing most of his life. Ray sang with me for many, many years in a Christian musical group called "Celebrate Life" under the direction of Polly Anderson, and sang lead in my first barbershop quartet. Ray and I joined the Statesmen in 1979. Perhaps Ray is known best for the countless solos he has sung at weddings and church activities. As the second of five boys, Ray grew up in rural Tolono on a farm. He started working at the Tolono grain elevator at a young age filling grain bins and train cars. After a strong gust of wind blew him off one of those train cars and broke his foot and a finger, he was assigned a "temporary" job in the office while his injuries healed. He is still in the same office today, only now he runs the show. If you want to know what grain prices are doing, Ray is your man. Ray lives in Tolono just a few blocks from Paul Stansberry. Ray, welcome to the performing chorus and the lead section. We all look forward to many fun times together.

**Nate Curry** (by Andy Isbell)

Nate was brought into the Illini Statesmen by a Youth In Harmony presentation at Champaign Centennial High School. Matt Carlen led the presentation and receives his first Man of Note award for encouraging Nate to come join us.



Nate is a sophomore at Centennial High School. He is active in the school choir and One Voice. He also enjoys writing poetry, reading, thinking and helping people. We've already been exposed to his sense of humor and are expecting much more out of him as he gets more experience singing with us.

Nate is singing lead with the chorus. Other than passing his audition and singing with us at contest, his most exciting event in April was turning 16 on April 7.

**Jorden Brotherton** (by Roundabout)

Jorden has been singing barbershop for about 3 years. He was active in Madrigals, spring musicals, and choir and was an All-State bass in high school. He also played tenor saxophone in the high school band. Jorden started singing barbershop in The Four Large Chords (with Matt Carlen and Steve Dawson of his current quartet, Roundabout.) They were all hooked when in their early barbershop days, The Four Large Chords went to an Ambassadors of Harmony show. Seeing one of the greatest choruses in the world is something all of Roundabout credits as their true starting point and ultimate goal. Jorden sings baritone because, well, no one else would! He sings the hardest part in all of a cappella history; just ask him. Jorden's great range, full and round voice, and personality add to the experience that is "Roundabout."



In his spare time, Jorden is a student at the University of Illinois. He is a sophomore studying hospitality management in the college of ACES. Jorden has been singing with the Illini Statesmen for over a year, but couldn't join last fall because he was in Florida doing an internship with DisneyWorld.

When he's not singing with Roundabout or the Illini Statesmen, you can find Jorden on the golf course with the guys, fishing, hanging out without a girlfriend, or just around the house tormenting his little sisters.

**Guests don't  
"just show up"**

*... someone  
invites them!*



**Have you invited  
a guest lately?**

## Fixing flats

*(or, how to maintain the tonal center when singing barbershop harmony)*

*By Andy Isbell, Music Vice President*

Although our contest performance was very good, we did end both songs a full step lower than we should have. The music team will be working on this problem over the coming months.

Most of the suggestions in this article come from Kevin Keller. He is a fine baritone singer and has coached our chorus in the past. He developed these techniques while singing with the Vocal Majority in Dallas, Texas, and has also used them with his current chorus, the Ambassadors of Harmony from St. Charles, Missouri.

As a frame of reference, the tonal center of a song is the key (such as B-flat) that a song is written and/or sung in. Generally the tonal center is the pitch blown on the pitchpipe before we start singing.

1. *When tuning up, strive to make the pitchpipe sound dull, or a little bit flat.* If you start low, you are more likely to go flat.
2. *Sing on the top side of the note.* Our music notation system is a collection of symbols that represent the sound frequencies (notes) we sing. Each note on our scale represents a particular frequency of sound (usually the A above middle C equals a frequency of 440 cycles per second or Hertz.) The smallest division in our system is a half step (i.e. A-flat to A) but the frequency difference between A-flat and A is almost 35 Hertz. So, there is quite a range of frequencies that the human voice can produce between an A-flat and an A. Likewise, there is a range of frequencies both above and below 440 Hertz that would still be considered an A. Singing on the top side of the note means singing as high as possible without moving into the range that would be considered the next half step up.
3. *Make descending intervals smaller by a quarter step.* This is more of a feeling than actual practice. Most of our ears aren't attuned to hearing quarter step intervals, and most of us cannot reliably sing quarter step intervals. However, it helps to think of singing smaller intervals when your part is going down the scale.
4. *Make ascending intervals larger by a quarter step.* The converse of the previous tip. Think of

intervals going up the scale as being larger than the music indicates.

5. *Held notes should be driven higher the longer they are sung.* This is similar to the old saying, "If you're not getting better, you're getting worse." Any time you have a long note to sing, you should be thinking of driving the pitch up as you sing the note. Otherwise, the tendency is to lose your breath support and let the pitch sag. This is especially important at the end of phrases.

It is my feeling that the melody line should be sung with respect to the tonal center. Harmony parts should be sung with respect to the lead line and the chord structure. Barbershop music developed as "ear singing" meaning you have to listen to the other parts to know how your part fits into the chord. Baritones and Tenors in particular have to make small adjustments to the pitches they are singing in order to tune the chords. Once you have a feel for how the chords are supposed to sound, your brain and voice will naturally make most of these adjustments automatically.

## The Naturals sing for naturalization ceremony

On Friday April 13, four Illini Statesmen members calling themselves **The Naturals**, sang for two naturalization ceremonies at the U.S. District Courthouse in Urbana. Welcoming 115 new American citizens from 55 different countries were **Hugo Feugen**-tenor, **Richard Hofstrand**-lead, **Ken Steinsultz**-baritone, and **Andy Isbell**-bass. We sang "The Star Spangled Banner," "This is My Country," and "God Bless America." It was a great experience for all of us, and we received many compliments on our fine singing.



L to R: Richard Hofstrand, Ken Steinsultz, Judge David Bernthal, Andy Isbell, Hugo Feugen. (photo by Paul DuMontelle)

An interesting side note is that Hugo is a naturalized citizen. His parents came to America from The Netherlands when he was a young boy.

## Barbershop movie nears completion

A new movie about barbershop singing called *American Harmony* is currently in post-production.

The movie traces the origins of barbershop quartet singing, and follows several of the Barbershop Harmony Society's top quartets as they prepare for competition. It follows them through the 2006 International Competition in Indianapolis.

To find out more about the movie and see a five minute preview, visit their website [americanharmonythemovie.com](http://americanharmonythemovie.com)

## Happy Birthday!

May 2 Bernie Donahue

May 14 Andy Isbell

May 18 Don Mosher

May 23 Ken Steinsultz

## 2007 Officers

President, Kevin Swartz

Marketing & PR Vice President, Paul Stansberry

Music Vice President, Andy Isbell

Membership Vice President, Jordan Brotherton

Program Vice President, Matt Carlen

Secretary, Dave Sutton

Treasurer, Denny Mulvany

Webmaster, Steve Severinghaus

Immediate Past President, Vern Knapp

District Delegate, Hugo Feugen

Chorus Director, Lee Reifsteck

## QCA encourages quartetting

About a year ago, the Illinois Quartet Champions Association set up a committee to call all of the quartets in the district and encourage them to compete. The calling program has shown results in getting more quartets on stage. The hope is that competition will raise the quality of our quartets through their efforts to get ready for contest and through the judging evaluations they receive. It should also make the contest more enjoyable for the audience.

The QCA is also offering coaching to quartets in our district. **Vern Knapp** and **Andy Isbell** are both QCA members from our chapter. Other coaches can be found listed on the Illinois District website.

## Barbershop on the web

Illini Statesmen – [illinistatesmen.org](http://illinistatesmen.org)

Barbershop Harmony Society – [barbershop.org](http://barbershop.org)

Illinois District – [www.harmonize.ws/ILL](http://www.harmonize.ws/ILL)

4-Cast, the Barbershop Podcast – [4-cast.tv](http://4-cast.tv)

## Upcoming Events

May 20, 2-4 p.m. Board Meeting, Swartz's house, 2403 Brookens Circle, Urbana

July 1-8, International Convention, Denver

September 28-30, District Convention, Peoria

Unless otherwise indicated, all articles were written by the editor, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the chapter. Submissions are welcomed and encouraged at [rechorder@illinistatesmen.org](mailto:rechorder@illinistatesmen.org), or the return address below.

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