

# FROM THE EDGE

*A periodic Newsletter of  
the High Country Barbershop Chorus,  
White Mountains Arizona Chapter*



Vol. VIII, No. 3

<http://www.spebsqsafwd.org/wmac/>

April, 2007

## From the President

**Bob Koons**



**M**usic is one of those endeavors in life, just like my own engineering career, the more you learn, the more you realize how much you don't know.

This was brought to my attention again on Saturday during our training session by the two coaches who worked with us all day. Besides being trained musicians, these guys, **Bill Biffle** and **Shawn Mondragon**, are dedicated, heart and soul, barbershoppers.

Most of us in the chorus, especially those of us who are still working, have other priorities that limit our time and energy available for singing. Personally, it's quite a stretch for me to maintain two homes 160 miles apart, maintain my participation with my choir in Tempe and still keep up with barbershop activities here in Show Low.

We have several people in the chorus who have some music education, but most of us have only limited experience with choirs and chorale groups in high school. The subtle refinements that coaches like **Bill** and **Shawn** can teach us are similar to the refinements we hackers can learn from a seasoned golf pro.

I was disappointed with the attendance at the training session. We will try in the future to set the date for the training session well enough in advance that everyone can build their schedule around it. It's a very important event for the improvement of our performances. Bill Biffle said, "when we're on stage, we are not singers, we are performers."

**Bob Koons**

## April Birthdays

April 11	Bob McDonald
April 12	Alan Johnson
April 13	Mick Mitchke
April 24	Wayne Jain

**Official April Census Number  
From the Barbershop Harmony Society  
Web Page**

**35**

**However, 7 are not with us this winter.  
Invite your neighbor to come and sing with us!**

## From the Director: Doc Dockendorf



It has been more than 15 years since I last judged with **Bill Biffle**, but I remember the last time like it was yesterday. Bill was always one of my favorite people to be with, because of his relaxed,

pleasant and unassuming demeanor. He was just a nice guy; talented, and nice. I have met many Barbershoppers, who are talented, but very full of themselves. Bill is not like that, so it was a distinct pleasure to have him with us at our annual Chorus Workshop on March 24<sup>th</sup>. If you are like me, you were very impressed with his approach to proper vocal technique. Like his concept of keeping sound production simple (remember, he did not say ‘sing’, he just said, “produce a tone”), his several steps to achieve this are well worth summarizing here.

The goal is to produce a free, resonant, in-tune sound. To do this, we have to not add things to the vocal production; we have to take things away, that get in the way. **Less is more!** Here are a few of Bill’s techniques to accomplish this:

- Relax, and drop the jaw (Jaw does not just hinge, it disengages and drops)
- Lips off the teeth
- Tongue in good position, i.e. tip on the bottom gum ridge, blade slightly forward, and relaxed
- Neck free, loose and relaxed (Head floats on a column of air) “Bobble head”
- Sound should come out of the forehead; lifted eyebrows and face

He also had other “Biffle Gems”

- Singers don’t sing words, they sing sounds, that the audience translates into words
- Give something up for the sake of the ensemble; eliminate the individual
- Emote from the feet! The body is free, light, and buoyant
- Loud is an ugly word; it is a nasty word! Music is big, it’s vibrant, it’s resonant, it’s impressive, but it is not loud. Car wrecks are loud!
- Listen to each other
- Make the Director “extraneous”
- When you sing well, and with energy, you will not flat
- Bases are the Leads, and the Leads are Melody singers

**Jerry Schrunk** and I had met **Shawn Mondragon** once before, when we attended a **Duke City Chorus** rehearsal, during the International Mid-Winter Convention held in Albuquerque this year, and we were quite impressed with what he had done with the chorus. **Bob Lawson** was responsible for bringing Shawn over to coach, and we are very appreciative of his effort to do so. Shawn has a very natural approach to the visual performance, and the moves he put into our songs were natural and therefore, easy to learn. Like Bill, Shawn had a few gems for us as well:

- Never stop moving
- Faces bright and alert
- No unplanned moves above the waist
- Not choreography, just moves that the group agrees on

**(From the Director, cont. on page 5)**

## Big Band and Barbershop

March 17, 2007, Performing Arts Center, Northland Pioneer College, Taylor, AZ



**The  
NPC High  
Country Chorus**

Photos by the Jim Burden  
Family

**The White Mountain  
Belles**



**The  
NPC “Big Band”**



## Chorus Workshop - Saturday, March 24

Each year, about one month prior to the FWD Convention, the Chorus enlists the aid of coach(es) to fine tune our performance on our contest songs. Also, to help us improve in general, of course.

This year we were extremely fortunate to have Bill Biffle from the Albuquerque New Mexico Chorus as our sound and singing performing coach. In addition, we had Shawn Mondragon, from the Albuquerque Duke City Chorus, to coach us with moves and faces.

It was a very valuable day to us, in large part due to the skill and teaching ability of these two gentlemen. We want them to know that we appreciate their participation very much. At the end of the day, our performance level was much higher due to their involvement!

Thanks Guys -



Bill Biffle      Doc Dockendorf      Shawn Mondragon



Photos:  
Jerry Schrunk 2007

**From the Membership VP Ron LaMar**

**(From the Director, cont. from page 2)**



Here is an alternate way to learn your music, especially if you have a player/ipod that you can skip back to the beginning of the song easily. With the music in front of you,

play the first section of the song, whatever seems right without being too long. Then skip back to the beginning and sing with the tape through that section with the music. Then skip back again and sing with the tape without the music.

When you can sing that far without ANY mistakes, add the second section, each time going back to the beginning of the song. You will find that by the time you get to the end you really know the song. Give it a try. It works for me.

**Ron**



- Don't let movement add tension to the vocal apparatus
- Make moves natural

We certainly want to thank Bill and Shawn for taking the time to come over and coach us. Now it is up to us to take what they taught, and not only apply it to the two songs we focused on, but carry it over to every song we sing. I am proud to be your Director, even if you are trying to make me extraneous.

**Doc**

**FWD, White Mountains Arizona Chapter:  
High Country Chorus**

**Officers**

<b>President</b>	<b>Bob Koons</b>
<b>Immediate Past President</b>	<b>Bob Cutlipp</b>
<b>VP Membership</b>	<b>Ron LaMar</b>
<b>VP Performance</b>	<b>Alan Johnson</b>
<b>VP Music</b>	<b>Alan Beste</b>
<b>VP Marketing, Public Relations</b>	<b>Open</b>
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<b>Board Members at Large</b>	<b>Bill White</b>
	<b>Jerry Schrunk</b>
	<b>David Wheeler</b>
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<b>Sunshine Chairman</b>	<b>Jim Murphy</b>
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<b>Web Master</b>	<b>Jerry Schrunk</b>
<b>Chorus Photographer</b>	<b>Conrad Monroe</b>
<b>Chapter Historian</b>	<b>Larry Kennedy</b>

*FROM THE EDGE* Apr.,2007

Calendar of Events			
Date	Event	Time	Comments / Location
Apr. 3, 2007	Show Committee Meeting	5:30 PM	Practice Hall
April 5, 2007	Church Performance, Class B Tux	6:30 PM	White Mountain United Methodist Church
Apr. 10, 2007	Music Committee Meeting	6 PM	Practice Hall
Apr. 22, 2007	Church Performance, Class B Tux, 260 to 277 then 1 mile church on right	6:30 PM	Shepard of the Pines, Overgaard
Apr. 24, 2007	Chapter Board Meeting	5:30 PM	Practice Hall
April 27-29, 2007	AZ/SN/SU Div. Convention - "College Days" costume		
May 8, 2007	Music Committee Meeting	6 PM	Practice Hall
May 12, 2007	Road Clean-Up	8:30 AM	Show Low WME Theatre
May 12, 2007	Chorus Party	5 PM	Doc's House
May 22, 2007	Chapter Board Meeting	5:30 PM	Practice Hall
<b>July 14, 2007</b>	<b>Annual Show - "Thanks for the Memory"</b>	2PM & 7 PM	BRHS

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*High Country Barbershop Chorus  
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