



# Pride Piper

## Act II

Black Hawk Metro Chapter  
Waterloo, Iowa

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Issue 3

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## A BLAST FROM THE PAST!

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**BY STEVEN WEST.....**Only a few of you will probably recognize my name since my involvement with the Proud Image Chorus was back at its start in 1978 when I became its first director. With the revival of this newsletter, I was asked to provide a history of the chorus during those early years. That's many years ago and a lot of "grey matter" has dissolved since then. With the help of Marie Easter, Mary Trettin and Denny Craun, we have tried to make this as accurate as possible.

It all began in late 1977. I had been an assistant director with the Dubuque Chorus prior to moving to Waverly. One evening I decided to visit the Twin Town Chorus to see friends and to sing some barbershop. After the meeting, a few of us went out and that's the first I heard, "We want to start a new chorus that will be very competitive in district competitions. Would you be interested in joining us and directing?" Needless to say, I was surprised by what they were saying and interested. So that was the initial "planting of the seed" that would eventually become The Proud Image Chorus.

The first year was very challenging! We initially thought there would be enough singers joining the chorus, a minimum of 20, so we could charter very quickly. That did not happen! There were some nights, I remember, when we had only seven or eight singers.

Fortunately, some of the members were very talented and could quickly move to another part so we could have a rehearsal.

As I look back on those years, I believe that being a small chorus helped form the foundation for establishing a very closely-knit group. That and a commitment to being the best would help the chorus achieve early success.

By the time 1979 rolled around, we had enough singers to charter as a new chorus. With great pride, remember that we're the Proud Image, we held our charter show on June 23, 1979. Our guest quartets were The Formalities, The Artful Dodgers and the Harmony Hawks from Cedar Rapids, which was our sponsoring chorus.

As we moved into 1980, we were a chorus of 20+ singers. It would be a very busy year for the chorus with a show and two district competitions.

On our 1980 March show, our guest quartets were the Side Street Ramblers and the Jax of Harmony. The lead in the Side Street Ramblers was Bill Thornton. He was the lead in the Dealers Choice which won International Competition in 1973. The Side Street Ramblers would go on to win International Competition in 1983.

Following our March show, Central States District Qualifying Competition was held in April. To become a strong competitor in the district, we made sure we involve highly respected barbershop coaches from the very start. Our first coach was a person who had been highly recommended to us. His name was Sam Gonzalez, who was the director of the San Jose, California chorus. Sam definitely set us on the right track!

The Spring competition at that time was different than it is now. It was a qualifying competition for any

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chorus that was outside of the top 10 in the district. A chorus needed to finish in the top five of the qualifying competition to move on to the District Competition in the Fall. And that was our goal, to qualify for Fall competition.

When all 26 of us walked off the stage at our performance, we felt our hard work had paid off. And when we were announced as the winner of the competition, we knew we were on the right track. Not only had we achieved our goal of moving on to the Fall District Competition, but we had won!

The 2020 BOTY, Jons Olsson, referred to winning this competition as his most memorable experience with the chorus. And I'm sure that was a memorable one for everyone who was on the stage at that time! (Editor's note: We can assure you that it was a magical moment for us, the supporters of the chorus as well!!!)

The focal point throughout those early years was to establish a strong foundation so the Proud Image could be a strong competitor at the District level and hopefully someday at the International level. Now we had won the qualifying competition and were headed to the District competition in the Fall. There we would need to be in the top 10 so we would not have to go back in the Spring to requalify.

That Fall in the District competition, the hard work and determination of the group paid off again with an 8th place finish. There were 31 men on stage that day. While we were a small chorus, we were now competing with the "Big Boys!" Now we could take one full year to continue building on the strong foundation which got us to this level.

Our 1981 show featured Kelly's Kids and Missouri Valley. Also, during this year, the chorus performed with the Waverly Symphony Orchestra. At that time, there was an arrangement the society had written for barbershop chorus and symphony orchestra. Since I was a member of the development staff at Wartburg and knew the director of the symphony, I convinced him this would be something special that no other orchestra had done in the area.

We wowed them that night!!!! In the audience were music professors that I not only worked with at that time, but had as professors when I was a student at Warburg working toward my Bachelor of Music Education degree. It was another great moment!!

And we continued bringing in very respected coaches. This time it was Bill Thornton, who was on our 1980 show as the lead in the Side Street Ramblers. And it was with his guidance that 29 of us went back to the 1981 Fall competition and continued to move up in the district with a 7<sup>th</sup> place finish. We were small but mighty!

That was the last I would direct the chorus in District competition. There are a lot of great memories of success as we positioned the chorus to do even greater

things in the future. So, it's time to again turn over the mantle and let somebody else continue writing the history of the chorus in those early years.

(Editor's note: A special thank you to Steve, who now resides in Kosovo, for contributing to this newsletter.)

### Press Release from PI's President.... COLORFUL MUSIC SPRINGS FORTH

by Steve Klawonn



The pitchpipe has been sounded for all Proud Image harmonizers!

After what has seemed like a very long winter's solitude, the time has come where we are starting to see a much needed and anticipated thaw that is allowing the colorful chords to start blossoming once again. If you have not done so already, please dust off your music, review it a time or two, and jump back into lifting your voice together as we make beautiful music once again.

In case you haven't heard, or couldn't believe your ears, we have indeed started to have in-person rehearsals again! It was with great delight that at the beginning of April, our Tuesday evenings were once again a time of fellowship with our best of friends, and the mindset settled upon our music that we love so well. The soulful sounds of "Little Pal" once again tugged at our heartstrings. We could literally and musically "Stand By Me". Our musical drought is finally over, relieving our anxiety that has lasted for what has seemed like "The Longest Time". So, "Oh Danny Boy", the pipes, the pipes are calling you back to rehearsal and we can't wait to see you soon.

At our first rehearsal, we had a very respectable 19 men in attendance. We did adhere to the social distance recommendations. Masks were optional because of the distances and offsetting of our seats so nobody was too close, even if they were behind you. It was heart-warming to know that almost everyone in attendance had received their vaccine shot, which lessened any worry about sharing our germs.

Men, I just wanted to convey to you that because we are all friends of the highest order, I believe that has helped us endure this past year. We would not want to lose a single one of you. We appreciate your patience during this difficult time

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and can't wait for your return as we prepare to get our voices back into shape for a free concert for our beloved Cedar Valley this fall, as we celebrate with our musical patrons the beginning of new time of lifting our voice to the heavens and hearing those inspiring overtones that makes you smile with delight.

Grab your music book, invite a friend, and let's hit this spring season hard and fast, "Somewhere, Over the Rainbow."

*With a song in my heart,  
Steve Klawonn*

### Music Committee Update

Gentlemen, our voices are finely tuned instruments, and we should take care of them. One way to not strain them is to warm up before each rehearsal or performance. Here is a link to an extensive warm up routine: [Dr. Dan's Voice Essentials](#) The music is a little cheesy, but it goes through both vocal and breathing exercises.

Tracks are being created for a few of the songs we are currently planning to work on for next Spring, so it will probably be a couple more months before we are ready to get the music out to everyone. Here is the list of songs we are currently planning to work on:

[Sweet Gypsy Rose](#) as performed by the Vocal Majority  
My Coloring Book  
To God Be the Glory  
Powder Your Face  
Applause  
Love Me and the World is Mine  
California Dreamin'  
Blue Skies  
I Want To Hold Your Hand  
A Whole New World

Until next month,  
Keep on Singing!  
Dan Bogart, Music Committee VP

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### Connecting with..... CRAIG PATTERSON

Way back when—in 1980—this singer joined the River City Chorus, Mason City, Iowa. And at 23 years old, he was “the baby in the cradle” of the chorus.

In a nutshell, it was Phil Hunget who invited Craig to a rehearsal of the River City Chorus, directed by Ron Phillips. While singing with this chorus, he participated in five contests and shows. In 1984 his job transferred him to Cedar Rapids and then on to Grimes. At that point, he sang with the Des Moines in 1988 and 1989. A career change moved him to Cedar Falls where he took some time off for his family. However, it was in 2012 that Craig attended a PI performance at the Gallagher Bluedorn. The director was David Boyd. Craig and Dave, who had sung together in Mason City, had a relationship then and have a good relationship now as Dave continues to direct the PI.

Craig has been married to his bride, Lynn, for 34+ years. They are the parents to one son and two daughters, all who live in Cedar Falls. Craig is a regional director for a Communication company, distributing headsets for fast food restaurants.

Craig remains an active member of the PI Chorus. He volunteered to be show chairman in 2013. In recent years he has been booster/ticket chairman, schedules the chorus to sing the National Anthem for local sporting events, coordinated the red traveling shirts for members, and most recently created a pictorial membership directory. And Craig, who enjoys cooking, has put together a pretty mean meal for the chorus to enjoy between shows! The coveted Barbershopper of the Year was awarded to Craig in 2019 for all his hard work and efforts.

Craig, who is looking to add to his three golden notes, enjoys the camaraderie, contemporary and recent show music of The Proud Image. So, men of the Cedar Valley who like to sing, don't be surprised if someday you are approached by Craig, who might just invite you to a chapter rehearsal of The Proud Image Chorus!

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### Get Acquainted with Chorus Member .....RANDY RUEHS

What happens when your town holds a festival and you are serving refreshments at your son's Boy Scout concession stand? You become a member of The Proud Image Chorus! That is exactly how the story goes for Randy!

It was back in 1995 during Jesup Farmer's Day when Randy heard the Proud Image Chorus singing while he was volunteering at his son's concession booth. His interest in learning more about the singers was evident as he made his way to the stage by the train tracks. He was soon approached by members, Tim Bleadorn and Jim Girres. And the rest is history! Randy has been singing with the Chorus ever since!

Randy and his wife, Iva, have two married children and three grandchildren, who are nine, six and two. Last year they moved from their home in Jesup to a larger home in Raymond.

Prior to working for ConAgra for the past 15 years, Randy was employed by Iowa Ham in Independence for 20 years.

Randy started singing in his church choir when he was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, sang in high school, and has sung in various chapter quartets. He continues to sing with The Doo Wops, a local vocal band.

One of Randy's earliest memories with the Chorus is everyone stopping for sandwiches at a restaurant on the way home after performing at the Iowa State Fair. It wasn't the food that was memorable but the thrill of the patrons' reactions as the Chorus serenaded them while enjoying a casual meal!

However, his favorite memories are those when he was part of a quartet who delivered Singing Valentines! The day started early in the morning when the Chorus met for breakfast and then set out to deliver countless songs to numerous recipients. The best part was that he was often accompanied by his wife, Iva, who drove the van and/or took pictures. You see, February 14<sup>th</sup> is Randy and Iva's wedding anniversary! The special day ended with dinner at a local restaurant with the other chorus members and spouses.

The reason Randy loves singing with the Chorus is the camaraderie he shares with his brothers in harmony.

When Randy is not singing, he and Iva enjoy spending time at their cabin and boating on the Mississippi River.

The next time you hear the Chorus sing, you will no doubt notice the high melodic voice of tenor, Randy Ruehs!

# MUSIC

A mind-altering noise with the potential to induce joy, happiness, memories, bliss, merriment, and mirth.



**Ask your doctor if  
music is right for you.**

Common side effects may include uncontrolled toe-tapping, swaying side-to-side, smiling, off-key singing, a lack of volume control, finger snapping, and dancing.

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### **D.A.T.E. Nite** By Bass Singer, **Denny Ernster**

D. A. T. E. Nite is one of two quartets within the Proud Image Chorus. We have been around for nearly seven years, six of them as a registered quartet. Let's go meet the boys.

Singing tenor is Adam Campbell. He is the musical leader of the group. In addition to singing, he has mastered a variety of instruments from the piano to the guitar to the trumpet. His musical experience is invaluable to the quartet.

Singing lead is Eric Boyd. He is a fourth generation barbershopper and brings a lot of passion and energy to our music.

Singing baritone is Tom Peterson. He also has a strong musical background. He is an experienced dancer as well.

And finally, singing bass is me, Denny Ernster. I am a long time barbershopper and have been involved with barbershop singing since 1983.

There is a fifth member of our quartet. Dave Boyd has recently started coaching the quartet. He brings his extensive barbershop experience and musical knowledge to our quartet.

Together we are D.A.T.E. Nite. The name is actually an acronym. DATE comes from all of our first names. **Denny, Adam, Tom and Eric**. Nite is also an acronym for **Nicely Integrated Team Effort**.

After a long lay-off due to Covid, we have recently resumed rehearsals. Even though we have all had our first vaccine, we continue to social distance in a large room as we await our second vaccination. It is harder to get the good barbershop sound but practicing socially distanced is better than not practicing at all! We are 'chomping at the bit' to resume normal practices and local performances!!

If you or an organization is looking for enjoyable, musical entertainment, please contact me, Denny Ernster@319-327-6593 or [derenster57@outlook.com](mailto:derenster57@outlook.com).



### **FROM IOWA CHAPTERS**

- 1) From Algona, the **Cornbelt Chorus** has been meeting via Zoom twice a month. They planned to begin in person rehearsals April 14<sup>th</sup> and present a Christmas show.
- 2) The **Harmony Hawks** from Cedar Rapids is now under the direction of Chad Knipfer, who also directs the Old Capitol Chorus from Iowa City. The Harmony Hawks are meeting in person. They hope to perform at the tribute to Heroes in June.
- 3) **Harmony Delegation** from Des Moines meets in person at Grandview University. They presented a virtual Christmas show and are planning a virtual annual show this fall.
- 4) **Happiness Express** from Denison reportedly is struggling with membership and declining interest.
- 5) Davenport's **Chordbusters** continued to meet throughout the pandemic with limited attendance. Their 2020 show was postponed but plans are in place for a 2021 outdoor spring show in May or June.
- 6) The **Harmony Brigade** from Fort Dodge will most likely delay rehearsals until July.
- 7) The goal for Iowa City's **Old Capitol Chorus** during the pandemic has been to keep their members engaged and involved through virtual chapter meetings, outdoor gatherings and virtual recordings. They delivered Singing Valentines virtually this past year. They are making plans for more in-person performances.

Rehearsals are Tuesdays @ 7pm  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
4031 Lafayette Road, Evansdale  
Contact Eric Boyd at 319-504-4645  
with questions or if you would like  
more information.

2021 Black Hawk Metro Board

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**LADIES ONLY\*\*\*\*\*ZOOM MEETING**

Ladies of the Proud Image Chorus are cordially invited to join together on Thursday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. This will be a great chance to get acquainted! If you would like to be included in this event, please contact: Marie Easter at [marie.easter@gmail.com](mailto:marie.easter@gmail.com) or Mary Trettin at [mytrettin@hotmail.com](mailto:mytrettin@hotmail.com). You will receive an email with information on how to join our meeting. You may also call Marie at 319-231-9488 or Mary at 319-239-1510. Hope to see you on May 13<sup>th</sup>!

**\*PLEASE NOTE: The deadline to submit articles for the July/August Issue of the Pride Piper Act II is June 15th. We encourage members to submit newsworthy articles by contacting:**  
**Marie: 319-231-9488**  
**[marie.easter@gmail.com](mailto:marie.easter@gmail.com)**  
**Mary: 319-239-1510**  
**[mytrettin@hotmail.com](mailto:mytrettin@hotmail.com)**

**\*\*\*THE FINAL TAG\*\*\*** Many of you may know or remember a favorite chorus barbershop tag.....”To Reach the Unreachable Star.” Just as in barbershop music, a tag is a dramatic variation in the last section of a song; this last section will be dedicated to updates on chorus members! Let us know if you have a “note” you would like added!

\*Condolences to Jons, Ann and son, Steve Olsson on the loss of Rebecca, Steve’s wife, who passed away in February.

\*We also want to extend our sympathy to Mark and Diane Lyman on the death of Diane’s mother, Sally P. Hartley.

\*Sending prayers and get-well wishes to Marie Easter who is recovering from surgery.

\*We are happy to report that both Jeff Morgan and Mark Lyman are doing well after recent surgeries.



**Happy Memorial Day!**