

# Longmont, Colorado's Barbershop Voice



Join Us Mondays at 7PM at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1303 S. Bross Lane

## Trash men find tiny tenor in ditch

by Bob Plass

We singing trash collectors gathered on a recent Saturday at the intersection of Hover and Highway 66 for our morning's work, as we do every six months. Boss man Jim Hopper had orange vests for the whole group, even the king-size one Bill Sachs insists upon.

Now I have been on a few of these trash expeditions, and one never knows what one will find in the ditch. It's a requirement for anyone who hasn't been on the crew yet to view a video first, which Jim has for viewing. It's all about drugs and how to handle them if we come across them. Trekking into and along the ditch can be a hazard. Ditto for the traffic that whizzes by at breakneck speed. One has to be alert at all times. There always seems to be some kind of surprise that awaits us on every trip.

We split up and several of us headed north up the west side of the road looking for whatever was there. The task filled us with apprehension because of the mud from all the recent rains. It was a good thing we had on waterproof boots. Now the format is for us to meet at the halfway point then go back towards our parked cars. If we have all the parts we sing a song or two at the end, but I didn't think it was possible with a lead, two baritones and a bass. We *really* needed a tenor.



Tired but happy trashmen (from left) Bob Plass, Jim Hopper and Bill Sachs relax at the end of a long day with the fruit of their labor. photo - Kay Sachs

## Hey, don't forget ....

July 6-9 International Convention    July 30 Chautauqua    August 6 County Fair Singout  
August 13 Barbershoppers Family Picnic    Sept 10 Chapter Retreat    October 7-9 Fall Contest

While I was diligently picking up everything that came my way, I came across a rather large bagged up item. It was heavy but tied up too. Was this one of those surprises that always awaits us? I wasn't about to open it so I just put into another orange bag. I think it was a dead animal. Which by the way isn't abnormal for us to find along the way. I think the others can attest to seeing many dead animals in the ditches too.

I was almost back to our sign that tells everyone who it is that sponsors the road for clean up. I was doing a thorough check in the deep grass when I came across a large bottle. I had to reach for it with my stick to grab it. I didn't want to reach my hand in there to pick it up if I didn't have to. One never knows what will be there.

I poked my stick into the deep grass to retrieve the bottle. And as I squeezed the handle to pull it out, to my surprise at the end of the stick was a mouse squealing at the top of his voice. I swear he looked just like Stuart Little. Here was the tenor we had needed. I felt sorry for the little guy so I let him go. But the next time we are out there cleaning up the ditch and needing a tenor, I'll be on the lookout for Stuart Little.

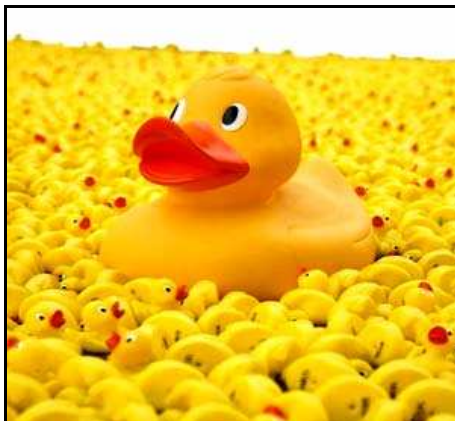
## Board Meeting

condensed from secretary Keith Watson's minutes

The May 16 board meeting was called to order by president **Jim Hopper**. Also present were **Jack Gibbs, Gerry Swank, Bob Reed, Dave Waddell, Bob Plass, Mike Hemphill, Dick Kitchener, Jim Schoemer, Gene Melick, Harry Hoffman, and Keith Watson**. A quorum was present. The secretary's and treasurer's report were reviewed and accepted.

Schoemer reported that we are moving forward for a show in Broomfield in summer of 2012.

Swank reported that he has contacted Merle Moore, that he is available to help John Hoover on grants, but the two



of them have not yet met.

The trailer we were considering is not for sale at the present time. However, the owner (Bill Stone) has agreed to let us use it. Stone has also made his truck available, and Chris Vaughn could pick up the trailer (stored at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Lakewood) when he comes to Longmont. Watson should send an acknowledgement and thank you to Stone.

\$400 was made on plastic duck sales. Felice Harlow bought 25 more that are being sold. This will mean a total intake of \$500 on the project.

Harry Hoffman addressed the board concerning the need for more support in setting up tables and chairs, etc. at St. Stephen's. After some discussion, Hoffman agreed to make a new volunteer list, and Hopper will make sure the need gets announced at rehearsal.

There was discussion about changes to words in "Gingham Gown." The decision will be left to the Music Committee meeting next Monday.

We will begin to get sections of Darin Drown's Basic Training Sessions worked into rehearsal times.

For our two contest ballads there will be some choreography, primarily facial expressions and subtle but uniform moves. There was discussion about having Cindy Hanson Ellis plan and coach us on choreography, and about having learning tracks made.

Membership – Plass will be putting a public service announcement in the Boulder Camera.

Program – Kitchener wants to do more tags and other fun quartets at rehearsals.

Picnic – Flanders Park is reserved for Saturday, August 13. We need to plan the day's activities. Waddell will go by and scope out the park facilities.

We have a contract with Vance Brand Auditorium for April 13, 14, 2012 for our next spring show. Schoemer and Swank volunteered to work on recruitment of show chairman.

Spring contest is proposed to be in Omaha. The board endorses the plan to proceed with plans to have it in Omaha.

Chris Vaughn has made a request for payment of tuition to Candidate School in order to become qualified as a judge. M/S/C to pay \$160 tuition cost for Chris.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Different staging, really learning new songs suggested

## Coffin reviews western show

**John Coffin** of the Denver Mile High chapter was kind enough to visit the Longmont May 7 show as a Standing Ovation evaluator and come back two weeks later to share his evaluation with our members. Many Longmonters know John well, as he was our director for 14 years, starting about 1990.

“The show was very entertaining and the chorus and quartets performed very well, as did your featured quartet and your guest performer,” said John. “The songs were well selected and created a great rapport with the audience. However there are things that could be corrected to fix a few moments in the show which could have been better.

“The song ‘Ghost Riders in the Sky’, performed by the VLQ, was a weak spot and would have benefited from more practice. The song ‘Old Fashioned Girl,’ performed by the chorus, also needed more practice before performing it on a show. Except for these two songs, the pitch and tuning was of good quality throughout.

“The taking off of the cowboy hats worn by chorus members at various times during certain songs could’ve been better orchestrated. It was distracting.

“The use of an active lighting plan to vary the colors on-stage would have enhanced the changing moods of the various songs. Likewise a western backdrop would have enhanced the setting of the stage.

“More visual interest would have been added if the chorus had stepped down from the risers at times during the first half to do some appropriate cowboy activities instead of just standing there.

“Despite these problems, there were so many strong points to this show that the audience thoroughly enjoyed themselves. As did I.”

## To change... or not to change

A word change here or there won't matter much, a poor performance will. Let's get on with it! Change the words if you want to, but let's get off dead center.  
—Mac

I did a little on line research on Al Jolson and found that he would probably be in favor of changing the words. —Felice

We are reading too much into this lyric. If we start changing this one we might as well pick every song we sing apart before we even begin to sing it. —Bob

This music is history – the song was written in 1922 by Al Jolson. If we start trying to conform our music to the political correctness of today, we will ruin it.  
—Mike

Joe Liles (at Silverton) rehearsed the attendees to sing Battle Hymn Of The Republic for performance at the evening show. He gave the group the option of singing “let us die to make men free” or “let us live”; and by voice vote we chose “let us live”. —Ben

Methinks that after almost 30 e-mails on this subject (29 so far is my count, not including the last go round before the show, most of which I deleted) it is time to move onto singing, and basics. —Ed

## Thoughts on recent rash of e-mails

Gentlemen:

To keep my feminist wife from laughing her head off over the line “*Promise to love and obey... and obey*” in our gorgeous contest song, I vote for the politically correct adaptation “Promise to love come what may...come what may.” That would raise the fewest eyebrows.

But here is a thought no one has mentioned in all of the e-mail exchanges on this subject. We could have alternate versions for differing audiences: At a Jewish wedding: “promise to love and oy vey... and oy vey.” At a farmer’s convention: “promise to love and bale hay... and bale hay.” At a fisherman’s retreat: promise to love and cut bait... and cut bait.” Hey, this re-writing of lyrics could get to be fun!

—Bill Sachs

# Greatest entertainer of century, Jolson was singer and songwriter

from the Internet (various sources, Musicals101.com & ragpiano.com)

Al Jolson (born *Asa Yoelson* in Russia) was in the minds of most who saw him perform, and many who have only heard his many recordings or seen his films, the greatest entertainer of the early 20th century. He was certainly the most influential, and his picture easily appeared on more music covers than even Anna Held or Sophie Tucker, both big contenders for the title. Jolson was a stage performer in every way, and it shows in his films and records. He also, according to his peers (one credible source is George Burns) had one of the biggest egos in the entertainment world, but got away with it because of his charm. He reportedly had the habit of leaving the water running in his dressing room so he would not hear how much applause the other entertainers were getting!

Through all of his fame, he never forgot nor denied his Jewish heritage, and regularly performed songs of his faith in his shows. *The Jazz Singer* can be viewed as semi-autobiographical (as it was for both of his colleagues Eddie Cantor and Georgie Jessel, the



latter who played the role on stage), and is recommended watching in any case, as is the follow up "talkie", *The Singing Fool*. His performances of *Kol Nidre* and *Sonny Boy* respectively are emotionally stirring even to this day.

What happened to Jolson that put him in the position of appearing to be a caricature of himself? He was the first to discover the mass media (records, radio, and sound film), but did not know how to adjust his stage persona so as to not overwhelm people in their living rooms or in front of the big screen. Overstatement worked well on a stage where one was unamplified, but not so much when the entertainer is more directly in the face of the audience.

At sixty-one, Jolson was back on top. *The Jolson Story* introduced him to a new generation of fans and sent his record sales soaring. Because he was entitled to a percentage of the film and recording profits, Jolson raked in a fortune. On radio, his presence now guaranteed high ratings. Several guest appearances with Bing Crosby (who was a longtime fan of Jolson) remain classic examples of network radio at its best. In 1947, Jolson returned to hosting the *Kraft Music Hall*, a series he

helped initiate back in 1933. After years of being dismissed as a "has been," this job was particularly satisfying.

Al's new stardom restored his zest for life. He and Erle adopted two infants, naming them Asa Jr. and Alicia. Jolson also started to dye his hair and put away his glasses when friends were on hand. His recordings of "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?" and "Baby Face" made the hit parade, and his version of the Israeli national anthem raised over \$100,000 for the United Jewish Appeal.

Columbia Pictures filmed a sequel to *The Jolson Story*. This time Jolson's thinly veiled displeasure with Larry Parks erupted into a sound stage tirade, and Jolson was barred from the set. *Jolson Sings Again* (1949) took as many liberties with Al's life as the first film had. Jolson's singing voice sounded sensational in sixteen numbers – fewer than the first film but still far more than the average musical. Jolson toured the country to promote the film and soak up the kind of audience acclaim he had always relished.

Offers poured in, and Jolson signed up for a new film and a series television specials. But he put everything on hold to go entertain soldiers fighting in Korea. When the Defense Department said it had no budget for entertainers, Jolson paid all expenses himself. During seven days in September 1950, he gave 42 concerts, carrying on despite a cold that would have silenced anyone else.

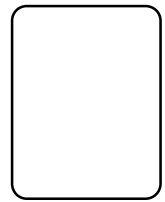
On his return to California, Jolson looked tired and admitted to reporters that the trip had been difficult. On October 23, 1950, he was in San Francisco preparing for another appearance on Bing Crosby's radio show. While playing cards with friends in his hotel room, he complained of indigestion. When two doctors arrived, Jolson was in bed. He joked with them and belittled his symptoms. Suddenly, he felt for his own pulse, said, "Oh, I'm going," and went limp. The "World's Greatest Entertainer" was dead.

At Jolson's funeral days later, his friend (and sometime nemesis) George Jessel gave a eulogy that remains a show business legend in its own right –

*And not only has the entertainment world lost its king, but we cannot cry, "The king is dead, long live the king!" For there is no one to hold his scepter. Those of us who tarry behind are but pale imitators, mere princelings." . . . Jolson was synonymous with victory – at the race track, at the ball game, at anything that he participated in, he would say, "I had the winner, ha, ha, why didn't you ask me?" This was not in bravado alone: this was the quintessence of optimism. Whatever game you're in, whatever game you play, feel like you are the winner.*

- quoted in Goldman, *Jolson: The Legend Comes to Life*, pp. 301-302.

high notes  
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**It's Great to be a  
 Longmont Barbershopper**

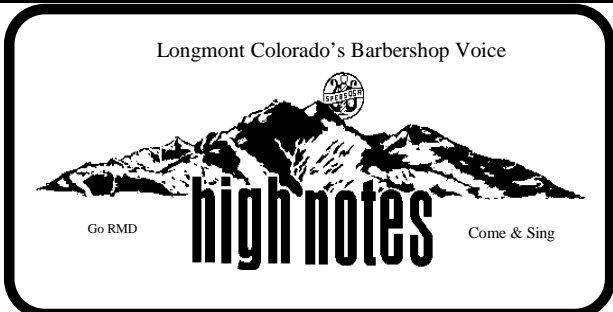
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Our mission: "We provide each member with enjoyable experiences through continuous improvement in our singing, performing, and entertaining in the barbershop style."

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The High Notes is published monthly for the enjoyment of Longmont's barbershoppers and its content may be shared by fellow Barbershop Harmony Society (used to be SPEBSQSA) members. Please send your comments, material for inclusion and other chapter bulletins to the editor:

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