

## **A golden retreat weekend**

*by: Tommy Morris, Alexandria, Va., Chapter*

Every year for the last four years, the **Alexandria Harmonizers** have had a weekend retreat at a local college campus (not too local, we want the guys to spend the night, so 100 miles from home is just right). The purpose of these retreats was to spend a weekend of quality time preparing for the “Super Bowl” of barbershop singing—the international convention of SPEBSQSA.

We came together to fine tune the package and to enjoy the fellowship of each other. Each year, it was my pleasure to assist the music vice president as retreat chairman.

For some retreats, we had special coaches flown in for the weekend to spend concentrated time with us. Other times, we used our own professional-quality musical team.

### ***It's all in the book ...***

To help the guys at the retreat, they are given a retreat booklet. This booklet consists of letters of encouragement from our president, our musical director and, of course, our artistic director. I preface the letters with one of my own, giving my welcome and the rules of the weekend. These rules are gleaned from the college’s convention center contract that we must sign.

The book contains a schedule for each day, giving the activity times, where to be and what is taking place, e.g. 9:00 - 10:20, full chorus rehearsal, upstairs theatre; 10:20 - 10:35 break, Alumni Hall foyer. With these schedules, the member knows exactly where he is to be at any given time.

Also in the book is a step-by-step, move-by-move, stage presence guide for each song. These will have been passed out months before, but this guide is the final version after all the kinks have been worked out. It is used at this point only for review, since the chorus is already very familiar with the moves.

In the book too, are pages of international convention information that is needed by each Harmonizer, e.g., contest day schedule, a day-by-day schedule at the convention, a listing of where each chorus is staying and when that chorus sings on the contest stage.

I list the top 11 choruses, as ranked by district scores, as well as the top ten quartets, listed by their rank of prelims scores. To round out the book, I put as many upbeat sayings as I can:

“Quality is a continuous, never-ending commitment to improvement”;

“The moment is now”;

“Trust in yourself, and your coaches, let go and take the plunge ... see what is waiting for you on the other side.”

### ***Preparation pays off***

It is expected that each Harmonizer will give 100 percent focus to the contest package as well as have 100 percent fun at the Saturday night retreat party.

The last day of the retreat is very moving as final thoughts are given by Director Scott Werner, Assistant Musical Director Mike Wallen and Artistic Director Geri Geis, each of whom, in their own way, walk us through the pages of the retreat book and reflect on what our goals were and how we accomplished them.

All in all, it is a great time of fellowship and a very rewarding experience as we put the final touches to the Alexandria Harmonizers' gold medal package. As we leave, we sing:

“And a lifetime's not too long, to live as friends.”