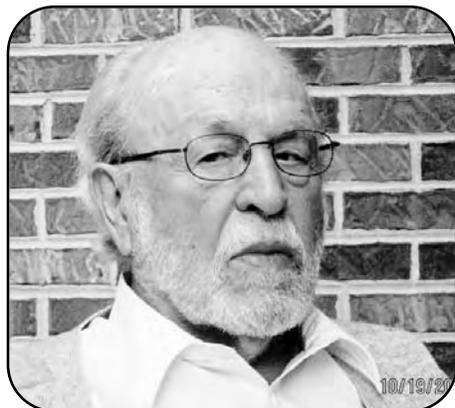


# OLD HARP



Number 36  
Spring 2009

The  
*New Harp of Columbia*  
Newsletter



Gideon Fryer,  
Epworth  
Elder



*From an interview conducted by Tina Becker in October 2008 regarding the origins of the Epworth Old Harp singings in Knoxville, Tennessee*

**Tina:** How did you get into shape note singing, and how did the Epworth singings begin?

**Gideon:** It started in 1969 when the Epworth Methodist Church on Highland and 16th Street went out of business as a Methodist parish. Epworth was a town in England where John Wesley was born. His father was the Anglican priest at the Epworth church. The building there was built in the first years of the 20th century. Methodist churches sprang up like wild onions. By the 1960's there were 60 of them in Knox County. Fort Sanders Presbyterian Church, which is now the Laurel Theatre, went out of business about four years before the Methodist Church on Highland did. They had leased their property to the Catholics while the John XXIII Center was being built on campus, so there was a Catholic connection, too.

*Continued on page 3*

## FRIENDS OF THE NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA

### A Word from the Board President

Current Board members for Friends of the New Harp of Columbia are: Kathleen Mavournin, President; Robin Goddard, Vice President; Joe Sarten, Treasurer; Ann Strange, Secretary; David Sarten; Claudia Dean; and Chaz Barber. Our focus is to support the groups that sing from *The New Harp of Columbia* and facilitate communication between them. We don't, as a rule, sponsor singings; we publish this newsletter, maintain the OldHarp.org website, hold singing schools, sell *The New Harp of Columbia* tune-book and recordings of the music, and work with UT Press to keep the book in print. The board meets approximately quarterly, often just before a 2nd Sunday singing at the Laurel Theatre but also in conjunction with singings in other locations. Some board members will rotate off the board in June and we'd like to hear of people interested in taking a turn as a board member. Terms are for three years. If you are willing to serve or would like to nominate someone to serve, please notify Kathleen Mavournin [865-691-9506 or kmav@icx.net] between now and the end of March.

We have not yet scheduled a date for the annual meeting. It will be announced later. Everyone is invited. There are no dues or other formalities required to become one of the Friends of the NHC, and no responsibilities. Just show up and tell us what you think. We will be especially interested this year in ideas about additions or changes to our book as we look toward another reprinting in the near future.

Kathleen Mavournin

See Page 9 for the Treasurer's Report and information on donations.

To be added to the listserve to receive information about singings each month, contact [chris.stoddart@gmail.com](mailto:chris.stoddart@gmail.com) or 865-470-9181



### ANNOUNCING A NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA SHAPED NOTE SINGING SCHOOL!

**Saturday, March 21st, 2009**, two sessions, 9:30-12:00 and 1:30- 4:00, at the Laurel Theatre, 1538 Laurel Ave., Knoxville, TN. Organized by Singing School Mistress Kathleen Mavournin, assisted by Tina Becker.

Classes for beginners and more advanced students will be held concurrently, upstairs and downstairs. Topics will include rudiments, reading shapes, beating time, history, leading tunes, and challenging tunes. A video will be shown during breaks. Teachers will be several experienced singers from our area.

Fee is \$12 a session or \$20 for the whole day. Fee covers printed materials, snacks at breaks, and drinks. Loaner books will be available for use during classes and new books can be purchased. An optional box lunch for an extra fee can be reserved when you register.

More information, a tentative schedule, and registration forms will be posted on the [oldharp.org](http://oldharp.org) website by the end of January.

The following day, Sunday, March 22, will be Epworth's Annual Singing and Dinner on the Grounds, 10 am to 3 pm, to put our new skills into practice! Spread the word, and we will get a good group!

For more info Tina Becker, 865-982-7777, or [loudsinger@gmail.com](mailto:loudsinger@gmail.com).

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#### OLD HARP NEWSLETTER

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## Gideon Fryer

(continued from cover)

The Presbyterians donated a church, the Episcopalians donated Bill Daniels, and the Methodists donated a church and Renfro Sproul. These were the assets that went together to make up the Epworth ministry. Renfro Sproul was an Emory graduate, who got his Masters of Divinity from Vanderbilt, and for his thesis wrote an urban church plan, a protocol for the church that would fit the age. The Epworth ministry had these assets: two old churches and a bunch of old houses that were ready for use. It started a number of things, because it had the space. It was a locale for Marge Gregg, a fabric artist and a member of the Glenmary Sisters out of Cincinnati, and others of those ex-nuns had roles at Epworth ministry. The ministry started several existing institutions like the Laurel High School, the Methadone Clinic, and the Community Design Center. It was an alternative to tearing down a building and turning it into a parking lot. The building on Highland and 16th still stands, but the Methodists pulled out of Epworth ministry in 1976 and sold that building to a charismatic group called Christ's Chapel which is still there today. The Laurel Theatre, which is maintained by Jubilee Community Arts, is a performing arts locale.

**Tina:** Why do we get to sing at such a nice place as the Laurel Theatre?

**Gideon:** The programs and activities that got started under the aegis of the Epworth ministry sort of assumed they were included in the property, so the Harp Singers were considered one of the long time programs or assets, therefore, it ought to be accommodated, like the dance groups.

**Tina:** Why is there such a variety, do you think, of people that like to sing this

music and enjoy each others' company?

**Gideon:** For the re-discovery of "roots." See, we became a group at the time of the Bicentennial so we were invited or showed up at those kinds of celebrations because we were singing historical music, and for a period of years this is what we did. You could have considered us a performing group at this time and the people were intrigued by the method. In the beginning, it helped that we had people who were not familiar with the music and we had people who couldn't sing, but it helped them to sing. I don't have much of a musical background, but I was able to learn it, and I like the sound it produces.

**Tina:** How long did you sing with Helen Hutchinson?

**Gideon:** We sang from 1973, when the Epworth Old Harp Singers started, until her death in 1985. It started under John McCutcheon's leadership. He was here on his personal

mission to learn the music of Appalachia. An unpaid song leader at Epworth, he ranged widely in the area listening to, and performing himself. He could play anything on strings, autoharp, banjo, guitar, etc. He had attended singings in NC, using the Christian Harmony book, and we even purchased copies of that book to use. We went to these local Tennessee sings, and it was done in the New Harp of Columbia, so we were out of step there if we didn't use that book. The singings we went to were at Headrick Chapel in Wears Valley and maybe a half a dozen annual singings that were held at local churches such as one in Anderson County in Jonesville and one in Greene County. The signature singing was the one at Wears Valley Missionary Baptist Church. That singing goes back to about 1920. It was held for three years at Wears Valley School. Then it moved from there to



Gid with singer and longtime companion Virginia Douglas

*Continued on page 4*

## Gideon Fryer

(continued from page 3)

the church building that was brought in from the National Park and built there at its present site, or re-built there, Valley View Baptist Church.

**Tina:** So you were already meeting at the Laurel Theatre when it caught on fire Aug. 13th, 1982, and moved the singing to Helen Hutchinson's home. How long did it take to re-build the Laurel Theater?

**Gideon:** It was out of service about two or three years. It was ready for use in 1985.

**Tina:** What was the **Smathers Family String Band's** influence on bringing shape note singing to this area?

**Gideon:** The Jubilee Festival started about 1970. Bill Daniels, the Episcopal anchor of the Epworth ministry, got a little money to pay for individual musicians and bands to perform at the Laurel Theatre which was the beginning of the present Jubilee Community Arts and money from the National Endowment for the Arts to put on these festivals. Bill would get performers to come on Friday and Saturday nights and then on Sunday mornings there would be gospel groups. The Smathers Family came for the Friday/Saturday music program and was there on Sunday to sing from the Christian Harmony book. They passed around books and we had a chance to experience the phenomenon and decided to get a group together to do it. We met at Kathleen Mavournin's home.

**Tina:** What about John McCutcheon's influence?

**Gideon:** John would do two or three performances for a typical Jubilee Festival, one solo, and then with a band. John is a talented performer and did this for a living. His initial repertoire was the protest songs of the 1960's. He was a part of the folk movement when black lung was a social issue and union songs and protest songs were popular.

## About the Smathers Family String Band

By June Jolley, daughter of Quay Smathers

This band consisted of Quay Smathers and his 3 daughters Cynthia, Liz and June, (me). We were officially named The Dutch Cove Old Time String Band. Daddy played guitar, Cynthia upright bass, Liz fiddle and I played clawhammer banjo. Later we were joined by Lynn Shaw after he married Liz and Zeb Jolley after I married him. We played strictly old time music and were in Knoxville at the invitation of John McCutcheon, who was a fellow musician and friend.

The band recorded 1 album, Sycamore Tea on June Appal records. We performed for many years in the 1980's and into the early 90's and did a lot of travelling in the southeast and up into Michigan. Liz and Lynn continued to perform for several more years and had a TV show on the UNC public station called "The Great American Music Company." Daddy passed away in January 2007. Daddy always taught a Christian Harmony workshop on Sundays at the annual Fiddlers Grove music festival in Harmony, NC. Laura Boosinger continues this tradition to this day.

If you open up the front of the Carolina book, you will find an introduction written by Zack Allen that is about my Daddy. He learned Christian Harmony as a young boy and led singing schools as he became a young man. He sang most of his life at Etowah and Morning Star (Old Folk's Day)

(The complete article can be found at <http://oldharp.wetpaint.com/>)

### Web Sites of Interest

[www.oldharp.org](http://www.oldharp.org)

<http://oldharp.wetpaint.com/>

[www.christianharmony.org](http://www.christianharmony.org)

[www.campdoremi.com](http://www.campdoremi.com)

[www.fasola.com](http://www.fasola.com)

[www.oldfieldssingers.com](http://www.oldfieldssingers.com)

<http://mywebpages.comcast.net/david.l.carlton/harpeth/index.htm>

## THE NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA - 2009 CALENDAR

<u>DATE</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>POTLUCK?</u>	<u>INFORMATION</u>
Feb. 15	Sunday	10:00AM	No	Knoxville Dance Festival, Laurel High School across from Laurel Theatre, Knoxville
March 20	Friday	6:15 PM	No	Jubilee Festival, Laurel Theatre, Knoxville
March 21	Saturday	9:30 a.m.	No	SINGING SCHOOL
March 22	Sunday	10:00 AM	Yes	Epworth Old Harp Singers Annual Singing, Laurel Theatre
April 5	Sunday	2:00 PM	No	Oldhams Creek Missionary Baptist Church (end of Kings Branch Rd) Sevier County
April 12	Sunday	5:30 PM	Yes	Easter Singing, Gooch-Mabbs Residence, 4401 Alta Vista Way, Knoxville
April 26	Sunday (4)	2:00 PM	No	Tuckaleechee Methodist Church Singing, Townsend
May 2	Saturday	TBA	No	Spring Festival, Townsend Visitor Center, Townsend, TN
May 3	Sunday (1)	2:00 PM	No	Middle Creek United Methodist Church, Sevierville
May 17	Sunday (3)	2:30 PM	No	Old College Singing at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Athens, TN
June 6	Saturday	10:00 AM	Yes	Franklin Singing at New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Greene County
June 28	Sunday (4)	NOON	Yes	Beech Grove Primitive Baptist Church Singing, Sevier County
Aug. 16	Sunday (3)	2:30 PM	No	Cades Cove Missionary Baptist Church Singing, Great Smoky Mtns. National. Park
Sept. 6	Sunday	2:00 PM	No	Wears Valley Methodist Church Singing, (Wears Valley Rd.), Sevier County
Sept. TBA	Thursday	6:30 PM	Yes	Music of Appalachia class from the University of Tennessee, Laurel Theatre, Knoxville (call to confirm)
Sept. 19	Saturday	TBA	No	Pittman Center Singing (above Gatlinburg)
Sept. 27	Sunday (4)	10:00 AM	Yes	Headrick Chapel Singing, (Wears Valley Rd.), Sevier County
Oct. 4	Sunday (1)	2:00 PM	No	Valley View Baptist Church, (Wears Valley Rd.), Sevier County
Oct. 10	Saturday	11:00 to 11:30	No	Pumpkin Town Festival, Athens, TN (call to confirm)
Oct. 18	Sunday (3)	2:00 PM	No	Dollywood Singing presentation, Pigeon Forge (call to confirm)
Oct. 25	Sunday (4)	2:00 PM	No	Maryville College Singing, Maryville
Oct. 31	Saturday	10:00 AM	Yes	Johnson City Singing, Sycamore Shoals State Park, Elizabethton
Nov. 25	Wednesday	6:30 PM	Yes	Thanksgiving Eve Potluck & Old Harp Singing, Laurel Theatre
Dec. 6	Sunday	2:30 PM	No	Christmas Singing at Kathy Jones' home, Karns (Note time change)
Dec. 12	Saturday	9:30 AM	No	Sugarlands Singing, Sugarlands Visitors Center, Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Jan. 10, 2010	Sunday	TBA	No	Wilderness Wildlife Week Singing, Pigeon Forge
Jan. TBA	Saturday	12:00-4:00	Yes	Larry O Annual Memorial Potluck & Singing, Laurel Theatre

If you are interested in riding a bus to the singings, please contact Al Wishart at (865) 696-7125 a few days in advance.

**THE NEW HARP OF COLUMBIA CALENDAR  
2009 SINGINGS BY EAST TENNESSEE COUNTY**

**Knox County, The  
Epworth Old Harp Singers**

**MONTHLY: Second Sunday,  
6:30 p.m., Laurel Theatre, Knoxville**

- February 8
- May 10
- June 14
- July 12
- August 9
- September 13
- October 11
- November 8
- December 13

KNOXVILLE DANCE WEEKEND SINGING —Sunday, February 15, 10:00 A.M. at Laurel High School, Knoxville.

Contact: Ann Strange (865) 573-4468 or strange@esper.com.

JUBILEE FESTIVAL —FRIDAY PRESENTATION, March 20, 6:30 p.m.; SINGING SCHOOL Saturday, March 21, 9:30-4:00; ANNUAL EPWORTH OLD HARP SINGING Sunday, March 22, 10:00 a.m. with potluck at noon at the Laurel Theatre, Knoxville.

Contact: Tina Becker (865) 982-7777 or loudsinger@gmail.com

EASTER SINGING — Sunday, April 12 Potluck at 5:30 P.M. at Bill Gooch and Meg Mabbs house. at 4401 Alta Vista Way.

Contact: Bill Gooch or Meg Mabbs at (865) 522-0515.

MUSIC OF APPALACHIA CLASS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE —September Date TBA, 6:30 p.m. at the Laurel Theatre, Knoxville.

Contact: Tina Becker (865) 982-7777 or loudsinger@gmail.com

EPWORTH THANKSGIVING EVE SINGING —

Wednesday, November 25, Potluck at 6:30 P.M.

Contact: Gideon Fryer 24-3136 or Tina Becker (865) 982-7777 or loudsinger@gmail.com

CHRISTMAS SINGING AT KATHY JONES — Sunday, Dec. 6, 2:30 PM, 9121 Garrison Road.

Contact: Call Kathy (865) 690-3906 or kej37931@comcast.net. (new time this year)

LARRY O ANNUAL MEMORIAL OLD HARP SINGING AND POTLUCK —Saturday, January Date TBA, 2009, Noon, at the Laurel Theatre, Knoxville.

**Singings Added to the Calendar  
in 2008**

January 15, Wilderness Wildlife Week, Pigeon Forge

April 24, Pigeon Forge Elementary School

June 13, Shannondale Retirement center, Maryville

July 5, Cora and Kirby Sweatt's 50th wedding anniversary, Athens

July 19, Wedding of Jeremy and Sarah Shipp, Kingsport

August 15, Benefit for TVUUC, the Valarium, Knoxville



*After the horrible shooting event at the Knoxville Unitarian Universalist Church, many singers stood together at the Valarium to show their support.*

**OLD HARP SINGINGS - 2009**

Blount County, The  
Maryville Old Harp Singers

**Monthly singings have been discontinued**

(It is recommended you call first--Nancy at 983-7631 or Nan at 984-8585.)

TUCKALEECHIE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, April 26, 2:00 P.M. in Townsend

Contact: Tom Taylor at (865) 984-8585 or TTaylor706@aol.com.

SPRING FESTIVAL SINGING, 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK — Saturday, May 2, Time TBA, Townsend Visitor Center, Townsend, TN

Contact: Robin Goddard at (865) 982-6148

CADES COVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, August 16, 2:30 P.M.

Contact: Robin Goddard at (865) 982-6148 or rlgoddard@aol.com or Tom and Nan Taylor at (865) 984-8585.

MARYVILLE COLLEGE SINGING — Sunday, October 26, 2:00 P.M.

Contact: Nancy Olsen at 983-7631 or bryne\_olsen@yahoo.com or Tom Taylor at (865) 984-8585 or TTaylor706@aol.com.



Cocke County, The  
Newport Old Harp Singers

**Monthly singings have been discontinued**

Contact: Judy Bryant at (423) 623-6811 or mtnmama2@earthlink.net

**Greene County, The  
Franklin Old Harp Singers**

**MONTHLY: Last Sunday,  
3:00 p.m., Cumberland Presbyterian Church,  
Greeneville**

- January 25
- February 22
- March 29
- April 26
- May 31
- June 28
- July 26
- August 30
- October 25
- November 29
- December 27

GREENEVILLE/FRANKLIN OLD HARP SINGING — Saturday, June 6, 10:00 A.M. at New Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church,

Contact Jeff Farr at (423) 620-8267 or Summersfarr@embarqmail.com

**OLD HARP SINGINGS - 2009**

**McMinn County, The  
Old College Harp Singers**

**MONTHLY: Third Tuesday,  
7:00 p.m., St. Paul's Episcopal Church,  
Athens**

- January 20
- February 17
- March 17
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 21
- August 18
- September 15
- October 20
- November 17
- December 15

OLD COLLEGE SINGING –Sunday, May 17, 2:30 P.M. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Athens  
Contact Cora Sweatt at (423) 745-0248, or Genevieve Wiggins at (423) 745-5322 or drgewi@bellsouth.net

PUMPKIN TOWN FESTIVAL —Saturday, October 10, 11:00 to 11:30 in Athens, TN  
Contact: Cora Sweatt at (423) 745-0248,



**Pumpkin Town Festival, Athens, 2008**  
Front row, left to right: Genevieve Wiggins, Kathryn Hunter, Corissa Sweatt, Cora Sweatt, JoAnn Love, Tesh Reynolds, Delores Reynolds. Back row: David Thumfort, Carlos Matthews, Doug Matthews, Ira Goforth, Randy Brock.

**Sevier County, The  
Sevier Old Harp Singers**

**MONTHLY: Third Tuesday,  
7:00 p.m., Middle Creek United Methodist  
Church, Pigeon Forge**

- January 20
- February 17
- March 17
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 21
- August 18
- September 15
- October 20
- November 17
- December 15

OLDHAMS CREEK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, April 5, 2:00 P.M.  
Contact: Hal Wilson at 436-2590 or Veta King at 428-1375, king2717@bellsouth.net.

MIDDLE CREEK METHODIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, May 3, 2:00 P.M., Sevierville  
Contact David Sarten at (865) 428-0874 or D\_Sarten@msn.com

BEECH GROVE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING —Sunday, June 28, Potluck at noon, Sevierville  
Contact Shirley Henry at (865) 453-5983 or Sharee Green at (865) 654-3557 or auburnact@yahoo.com.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SINGING — Sunday, Sept. 6, 2 P.M., Wear's Valley  
Contact Bruce Wheeler at (865) 453-9328 or wwheele1@utk.edu.

HEADRICK CHAPEL SINGING —Sunday, September 27, 10 A.M., Wears Valley  
Contact Ann Strange at (865) 573-4468 or strange@esper.com or David Sarten at (865) 428-0874 or D\_Sarten@msn.com

**OLD HARP SINGINGS - 2009**

WEARS VALLEY SINGING AT VALLEY VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH SINGING—Sunday, October 4, 2:00 P.M. in Wear’s Valley.

Contact: Dr. Bruce Wheeler (865) 453-9328, wwheele1@utk.edu or Paul Clabo (865) 453-5847.

DOLLYWOOD SINGING — Sunday, October 18, 2:00 P.M.,Pigeon Forge

Contact: David Sarten at (865) 428-0874 or D\_Sarten@msn.com

SUGARLANDS VISITORS CENTER SINGING — Saturday, December 12, 9:30 A.M.

Contact: Paul Clabo at (865) 453-5847

Carter County, The Old Fields Singers

ALL DAY SINGING AND DINNER ON THE GROUNDS (TWO-BOOK SINGING) — Saturday, October 31, 10:00 a.m., Sycamore Shoals State Park, Elizabethton

Contact: Don Wiley at (423) 341-8893 or drw509@embarqmail.com

**TRULY SUPPORTIVE**

Last year, the Friends received several major gifts from Old Harp singers and their supporters. We would like to publicly acknowledge the following for their significant donations:

- Ken and Pat Larson** (Tina Becker’s parents)
  - Sara Baskin**
  - Mr. & Mrs. I. D. Goforth**
  - Gideon Fryer**
  - Al Wishart** (in-kind contribution)
  - Ann Strange** (in-kind contribution)
- and a special recognition to **Cora Sweatt** who purchased and distributed more New Harp of Columbia songbooks than anyone else!

**THANK YOU!**

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

2008 was another good year for Friends of The New Harp of Columbia. Thanks to some very generous contributions, we ended the year on a positive note.

We had income as follows:

Donations	\$1,313.24
Book and CD Sales	\$1,293.00
Miscellaneous	\$75.92
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$2,682.16</b>

Expenses of:

Newsletter, Spring 2008	\$490.58
Postage	\$209.17
Books	\$1,307.12
Headrick Chapel toilet and supplies	\$140.00
Miscellaneous	\$20.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,166.87</b>

With a total net income for the year of \$515.29. Total assets, including book inventory, for the organization at the end of 2008 were \$5,559.12

Joe Sarten, Treasurer

**DONATIONS**

The non-profit Friends of The New Harp of Columbia added a donation button to the www.oldharp.org website. This PayPal button will allow people to make a donation online using a credit card. While the Board believes this will be a convenient and valuable tool, it does not come without cost. PayPal (and other such companies) charge a handling fee. Since we are a non-profit, we get a reduced rate of \$0.30 + 2.2% per donation. For a \$10 donation, this would amount to \$0.52. For a \$100 donation, this would amount to \$2.50. While the donor would be able to count the entire amount for tax purposes, the amount Friends receive will be reduced by the service charge. We hope that you take advantage of this convenience to make a donation. You can also still send checks made out to “Old Harp” mailed to 307 Lake Forest Dr., Knoxville, TN 37920.

## YOU CAN TEACH OLD HARP SINGERS NEW TRICKS

### I Survived Camp FASOLA

by Claudia Dean

Camp Fasola, "an old-fashioned summer camp for learning and singing Sacred Harp" was held at the end of June 2008 at Camp Lee on the outskirts of Anniston, Alabama. Singers came from 30 states, 2 Canadian provinces, and the U.K.

Camp Lee is a large and comfortable retreat/summer camp located on an old farmstead. There are two ponds and a small lake, an extensive network of dirt roads and paths through the woods and an old country church where we sang. I spent much of our limited free time walking in the woods, trying to replace do re mi with fa so la in my overloaded mind.

Camp Fasola is not laid back. Classes were tightly scheduled and included beginner classes on theory and leading, and more advanced classes on keying, composing, and leading, and also classes on the music of regional composers who wrote Sacred Harp music in the 20th century. Some of these contemporary songs are favorites and sung often, at least in this part of Alabama. All of the teachers were very competent but also personable, kind and extremely generous in their teaching.

Sacred Harp singing is different from Old Harp or Christian Harmony although we share many tunes. When I said I sang Old Harp and a little Christian Harmony, someone said in a stage whisper to her companions "Those folks don't hold with fast singing." And it is true that, while singing, I felt that I had been left at the station while a bullet train zoomed by. What these singers lack in shapes they make up in speed. They also accent beats of the measure which results in a precise, almost staccato sound. The hardest thing for me was beating 4/4 music in 2, so that the singers fire out the music while the leader's arm dispassionately goes down...up. This style of leading is not animated; one does not tap

one's foot, rock, or lean into the beat.

The level of ability and musicianship among these singers is very high. The camp attracts dedicated and experienced singers, and, had I realized their level of competency, I would have been too intimidated to attend. However, I was introduced to more music to love and a great desire to improve my singing.

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### I Loved Camp DOREMI

by Robin Goddard



The second Camp Doremi was held August 7-10, 2008 but I was a newcomer. I had never sung from any book except *The New Harp of Columbia* and old hymnals, so seeing new shapes was confusing and I was not exactly sure what I had gotten myself into. I realized it didn't matter, for someone in my section was always willing to help and keep me on track. When we chorded for the first song, it was a sound from the past of 60 voices, all dedicated to sharing their love of shaped note singing. It sounded as if the heavens had opened the doors and angels were helping me sing. I could just see smiles coming from all the people who were sitting up there remembering their lives on earth and

*Camp DoReMi, Continued*

the beautiful sounds from their singing schools. The sound from that first evening will be imprinted on me forever.

The history of shaped note singing was taught by John Hollingsworth. With his soft-spoken voice, he explained all the revisions that have taken place since the 1800's in America. Finding myself needing confidence in leading a song, I again attended John's leading class and found myself thinking about leading a song for the evening singing. As we spent the three days together as a family dedicated to keeping an American tradition alive, my heart continued to thump with anticipation on what would be introduced next. My moment was drawing closer to the Saturday evening sing. I found myself practicing the beat and my hand was constantly moving as my mind silently rehearsed the song I planned to lead.

The time had come and Jane called my name. With my knees shaking, I kept telling myself I could do this. I watched all the veteran members of the group, especially Robert Kelly and Michael Spencer. I remember, you just face the lead section and watch the hands on the front rows. Robert gave the pitch, we chorded, and sang. The sound from that moment is forever printed in my memory. This was an experience of faith, admiration and happiness. Yes, the heavens again had opened their doors and the sound of angles on Earth had taken over. As I looked around the square, I then realized that I had become a member of a very elite family who is preserving a tradition that will forever be shared.

This is our mission to pass onto the next generation.

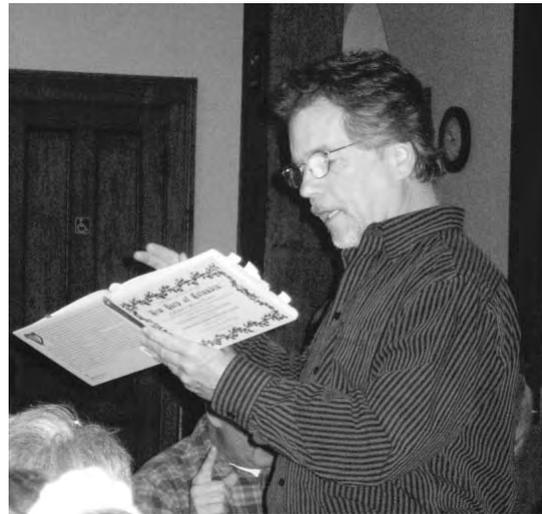
**Camp Do-Re-Mi 2009**

August 6-9, 2009 • Wildacres Retreat  
Little Switzerland, North Carolina.

Cost: (before July 1) \$220 includes 3 nights lodging, 8 meals and classes. (\$180 for ages 6-12.) Rooms are double occupancy. Participation limited to 65 individuals. The schedule and registration information is available at [www.campdoremi.com](http://www.campdoremi.com) or contact Jane Spencer - [ejanespencer@yahoo.com](mailto:ejanespencer@yahoo.com) or (706) 769-8782.

**A Short Course on Leading**

*(Editor's Note: Chaz Barber is a long-time Old Harp singer and also is a choral director by profession. He spoke with and wishes to thank Claudia Dean, Virginia Douglas, Kathleen Mavournin, Ann Strange, and Paul Clabo for their input on this article. Also, Chaz will teach leading at the March Singing School.)*



A big issue for some Old Harp singers is that many of us did not grow up in families or church traditions of Old Harp singing. As a traditionally-trained choral director, I would like to take a quick look at the two disciplines and suggest how those who would like to learn to lead or strengthen their leading could approach this task. Most importantly, simply affirm to yourself that when you get in the middle of the square to lead a song, you must lead. It's an attitude and it requires at least some attention, including the tempo you want the song to go. That said, be gentle with yourself as you are learning, and the singers will be your enthusiastic supporters. The most basic leading requires the leader to keep a steady beat. It may feel awkward, but it will become easy as you learn to sense the movement. Leading takes practice, just as singing does.

You will also need to know the meter of a song. To determine the meter, or--time--of a song, look at the stacked numbers at the beginning of each song; they are called the time signature. Lesson III of Elements of Vocal Music in the front of *The New Harp of Columbia*

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## LEADING, CONTINUED

describes “three distinct kinds of time.” Metered music consists of a repetitive pattern of strong and weak beats. I will simplify and describe them as duple, triple and quadruple; that is, two-beat patterns, three-beat patterns, and four-beat patterns. The first beat of each pattern is down, then other beats must be either sideways or up in direction, so that you can go down again on the next strong beat. The strongest beat of each pattern needs to be a downward motion. Strong equals down. In all musical styles this is called the downbeat. Simply put, in duple meter your arm motion is down-up, down-up, etc. Triple meter is down-side-up, down-side-up, etc., (some call it a triangle beat pattern) and quadruple meter is down-side-side-up, down-side-side-up, etc.

Notice that not all songs begin with a strong beat, so you will need to decide whether to begin with upward or downward movement. A few well-known songs can clarify this point: No. 14 Mear begins one beat prior to a barline, so the first beat is up; the first downbeat is on the word “God’s.” No. 53 Dundee also begins on an upbeat. No. 115 Northfield begins on a downbeat.

There are three more things I will ask you to consider. First, it is a great idea for you to keep time with the leader. Keeping steady and clear time is the most fundamental aspect of leading. You will also learn to feel the traditional tempos by doing this.

Next, take some time to choose a couple of songs and practice leading them at home. The late Bruce Helton, one of the strongest leaders we have ever had, would often spend 3-4 hours a day, sitting in his green recliner, singing and leading the air. Decide how fast you want the song to go and get used to keeping your arm pattern as regular as possible

while singing the song.

Finally, if you are really serious about improving your leading, get thee to a summer camp! I have seen several singers who attended either Camp DoReMi and Camp FaSoLa come back to us being so much easier and more inspiring to follow! One camp devotee told me the following:

“I started shape note singing about five years ago and realized very quickly that, if I wanted to sing a particular song, I’d better lead it...abject embarrassment led me to want to refine my skills...the fog began to lift when I went to Camp Doremi 2 years ago and took a rudiments class and leading for beginners...this past June I went to Camp

Fasola in Anniston, Alabama and took more rudiments and leading classes...I learned a tremendous amount... Jane Spencer, at Camp Doremi, emphasized that singers in the front row of the lead section must beat time with the leader so that the beat is communicated with

other singers (often altos) who can’t always see the leader’s arm, and, it helps new leaders a lot...most leaders can improve, by learning more about the music and also by asking themselves “What is the beat and how can I communicate it best?”

In our tradition, leading is as fundamentally important as singing, in its way. So get to as many singings--from any tradition--as you reasonably can. Sit in the front row and practice leading at every singing. Notice which leaders get the best response from the group, and study their arm movements. Though you may see some variation in styles, you’ll notice that we sing our best for the folks who have a steady, strong beat. And you can bet that every one of them learned from other strong leaders. Come, join the tradition!

