

'Shower singers' belt barbershop rhythm

By CAROLINE PETRICH
Of the Emerald

The Sweet Adelines, a barbershop singing club, is one of few women's organizations in Eugene not fighting for equal rights.

Members say they enjoy singing for themselves and for others.

"We just sing for those who ask us to. Many times we'll sing for nursing homes, clubs, things of that sort," says Linda Houston, president of Eugene's Sweet Adelines.

"We don't ask for money," she says. "If someone does gives us a donation, we use half of it to buy music. The other half goes to the national (Sweet Adelines) organization."

Housewives, secretaries, nurses and teachers are among those who make up Eugene's 34-member chapter of the national organization. There are 692 Sweet Adeline organizations around the United States, with about 30,000 active members.

"There are definitely no professional singers involved," Houston says. "Anyone who can carry a tune may join." The

Sweet Adelines sing together every Tuesday night in the Our Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Houston describes the Sweet Adeline experience as educational.

"We like to get 'shower singers' and train them to sing," she says. "Singing is very infectious. It's easier when you are part of a group singing."

"The product is greater than the individual contribution. Each person feels a part of the group because of their contribution."

As the name suggests, the Sweet Adelines chorus consists of only female voices. Men are involved, but only as directors.

"Men approach music differently," Houston says. "I think that the women are greatly out-doing the men in creativity."

Ironically, the Sweet Adelines began because of men. In 1947 some women were tired of hearing only male barbershop choruses, so they followed the men's example and started a female chorus.

Now Sweet Adelines can be heard singing around the world. Eugene's ladies are only one



Photos by John Harris

Fun and enthusiasm are harmonizing forces behind the Sweet Adelines. "Singing is very infectious," says Linda Houston, club president. "Anyone who can carry a tune may join." The

Eugene group is one of 692 Sweet Adeline organizations in the United States, started in 1947 by women tired of only hearing male barbershop choruses.

chapter in a national organization which includes choruses that perform for Americans living abroad.

"There used to be a chapter in Saudi Arabia but because of the troubles in the Middle East, the group had to be disbanded," Houston says.

Sweet Adelines sing old-fashioned songs like "Why Did You Believe Me When I Told You That I Loved You When You Know I've Been A Liar All My Life." They also sing modern melodies, such as "I Am Woman" by Helen Reddy.

"Everytime a good song with a good melody comes out, somebody in the Sweet Adelines will do something with it," Houston says.

Traditionally, the barbershop quartet has represented the light comic music genre of the late 1890's. However, Houston concedes, "Barbershop is becoming a respected art form. People are starting to recognize it as something special. Singing barbershop isn't easy; it involves such things as breath control and mouth position."

Some singers make it look so easy when actually it's not."

The Sweet Adelines look for excellence in performance. Their motto is "Harmonize the

World."

"It looks good to the audience when we have fun singing. It's more enjoyable for the audience to watch," says Houston.



Barbershop singing isn't as easy as it looks; it takes a lot of breath control, according to Sweet Adeline members.

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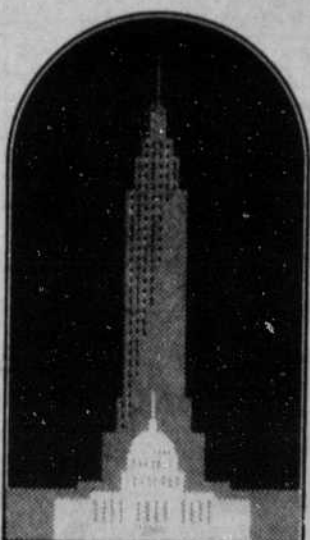
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