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D | LIFE & ARTS

Sunday, August 11, 2013



Clark Howard:
7 do's and
don'ts for the
long haul. D3

Section D: Front page (bottom) ~ Page D4 on following page.



The last group of Inland Children's Chorus graduates in 1970. Thousands of area children were part of the chorus, which was sponsored and funded by Inland Manufacturing Division of General Motors thrived from its founding in 1936 until 1970. CONTRIBUTED

MUSIC AND MEMORIES

Inland Children's Chorus recalls thrill of performing

Former members share memories of Dayton musical group.

By **Meredith Moss**
Staff Writer

When Gerald Alred is asked about the success he's had in his academic career, he's quick to credit an important influence from his childhood: the Inland Children's Chorus.

A professor emeritus of English and professional writing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Alred says he's one of thousands who were

greatly impacted by participation in the only corporation-sponsored children's choir in the United States in its day. The brainstorm of Wallace Whitacre, founding general manager of the Inland Manufacturing Division of General Motors Corporation, the 100-member chorus thrived in Dayton from 1936 to 1970. In addition to the senior chorus, hundreds of other youngsters participated as members of the "concert, understudy and junior chorus groups."

"It was in the heart of the Depression and he wanted to do something for the children," Alred explained. "It

was lavishly funded – they brought in two-time Tony-award winning nominee and long-time Broadway technical and costume designer Raymond Sovettoto to stage the chorus, and Deems Taylor – the broadcast voice of the New York Philharmonic – to narrate and arrange a number of the Chorus recordings."

The Chorus – with girls dressed in long blue dresses and boys in jackets and crisp white shirts – was featured in national radio and television performances, made recordings and performed with the

Inland Chorus continued on D4

MEMORIES OF THE CHOIR

"I was 13 when Mother took me to audition for the Chorus. I was scared, but Mr. Westbrook was wonderful and I was accepted. I loved being a member. The girls that sat in the last row with me were all nice."
— Shirley Whiting, Clayton

"The chorus experience brought a whole world of music to my life. I have been a singer ever since!"
— Bob Ivory, Cincinnati

"It as a very special gift that the Inland Mfg. Div and General Motors gave to many children. I still appreciate the friends I made belonging to the Chorus, and I still sing in my church choir."
— Phyllis Denlinger Phillips, a member of the original choir in 1936, Dayton

"I have wonderful memories of the Inland Chorus. I appeared with the Chorus on the Steve Allen Show in 1952 at Memorial Hall."
— Ron Fillburn, Miami Twp.

"We came downtown to all the practices taking the city buses. We practiced at the Loretto. I remember the first time I had an audition. I sang 'The First Noel.' Years later, I met my husband and he told me he had "cut a record." It turned out it was for the Inland Children's Chorus. He was one of two young boys who sang 'Oh Come Little Children.'"
— Dolores Kulhanek Rehling, Englewood



Joan Boston, chorus member 1958-1966, (left) and Joyce Boston, 1962-1970, reminisce at a reunion of Inland Children's Chorus members. Joyce is holding an album of songs from 1965.

my daytondaily news.com

See more reunion photos.



Members of the Inland Children's Chorus gather for a group photo during a reunion. Inland Manufacturing, a division of General Motors from its creation in 1922 to 1989, sponsored the Chorus from 1936 to 1970. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY PETER WINE

Chorus members reminisce

Inland Chorus

continued from D1

Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. Alred says Milton J. Cross, "the voice of the Metropolitan Opera," called it "one of the most unique and inspiring programs of its kind in the country."

The stated goal was "to give 8- to 16-year-old children of employees a musical education and training which they might otherwise not be able to obtain, and to make a contribution to the cultural life of Inland employees and the community."

Alred says it accomplished all that and much more. He says the beloved chorus was a celebration of education through the power of music and performance and that he and the others learned lessons that have sustained them throughout their lives.

"We learned self-discipline, preparation, excellence and collaboration as we prepared and performed great music from classical to popular," he said. "In short, we all learned what it means to be professional."

Joyce Albrecht, the American lyric coloratura soprano known as Joy Clemens when she sang at the Metropolitan and New York City Operas, was a member of the group. So was Stephen Roddy, who now directs the Houston Children's Chorus which has performed for presidents, at Carnegie Hall and worldwide. Roddy has written that the Inland Children's Chorus "was an incredible influence on my life and career."

Inland project takes shape

In recent years, the chorus has become more than a memory for Alred and others, thanks to the Inland Chorus Preservation Project and Wright State University Libraries.

The project got its start when Alred, a Chorus member from 1951 to 1959, began digitizing the Chorus records from his family's



Shirley Whiting, a member of chorus from 1944 to 1948, looks at a May 1965 article from Dayton USA magazine during a reunion of the Inland Children's Chorus in April at MCL Restaurant & Bakery in Kettering.



Bob Drerup, a member of the chorus from 1957 to 1959, (left) talks with Jerry Alred, who participated from 1951 to 1959.

collection for himself and his cousin. In 2009, he got together with some other former Chorus members for lunch and they talked about how to preserve the music and history that had so greatly influenced their lives.

The result is a web site (<http://inlandchorus.com/>) and a permanent and safe home for Chorus memorabilia in Special Collections and Archives at Wright State's library. The materials, available to the public, range from feature articles and concert reviews to playable music files from live concerts and studio recordings. There are concert programs, professional chorus photos and reminiscences from former members.

Chorus reunions

Another dream was to reunite those who once bond-

ed through song. Three annual lunchtime reunions have taken place at the MCL Cafeteria in Kettering with another planned for April 26, 2014.

More than 60 attended the last gathering in April 2013, including two of the original Chorus members — Mike Connair who flew in from Delaware and Phyllis Denlinger Phillips, who is from Dayton. Wright State's archivist Toni Vanderbos was the featured speaker.

Vanderbos says it was "phenomenal" to observe the members as they came together.

"It was obvious that being part of the chorus had a major impact on the lives of those who came," she said. "They've saved their memorabilia all these years — the photos, the recordings, the programs, the scrapbooks. Now all of those



Songs from 1966 are included on the album "Let There Be Song." These items are now included in the archives of Wright State University and are online at InlandChorus.com.

'We learned self-discipline, preparation, excellence and collaboration as we prepared and performed great music.'

Gerald Alred
Former Inland Chorus member

things are coming together for our collection."

Many told of the work ethic that served them well.

"I heard stories about how they precisely timed the opening of the black binders held in performance, and yet every note of music was memorized."

Vanderbos has also received calls from community members who were not in the Chorus as children, but who remember the concerts and being in awe.

"There are many lessons to be learned today from the history of Inland Children's Chorus," she said.

If you were a member of the Inland Children's Chorus and would like to be included in future reunions, email Gerald Alred at alred@inlandchorus.com or 262-512-3639. To visit the Wright State archives and view the collections, see www.libraries.wright.edu/special.

Contact this reporter at 937-225-2440 or email Meredith.Moss@cox inc.com.

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LIFE & ARTS

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THE WEEK IN ARTS
 TODAY
"Andy Warhol: Abstracts The Art of Pop" through Sept. 16 at Dayton Art Institute, 456 Belmont Park N. Dayton 937-233-4441. www.daytonartinstitute.org
"Harris Theater's Day Off" 7 p.m. at Harris Theater, 1011 Main St., Dayton 937-228-3599. www.harris-theater.com
Scriptures on the Square? 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. at Downtown Dayton, North Church Street and West Main Street. Free. 937-232-3455. www.daytonartinstitute.org
"The Gospel of Matthew" at Dayton Art Institute, 456 Belmont Park N. Dayton 937-232-4441 or www.daytonartinstitute.org
 MONDAY
"Country Old-Country" presented by Meghan & Mystery, 7 p.m. at The Spirit of Music, 900 W. 12th St., Dayton 937-536-8888. www.meghanandmystery.com
WEDNESDAY
"Honor of the Teacher" 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Redburn Educational Museum, 421 N. Main St., Redburn. Free. 937-393-2463. www.harris-theater.com
 THURSDAY
"Hallelujah: The Roger Brown Show" 7:30 p.m. at Theatro 1591 E. Pitt St., Dayton 937-222-3466
 FRIDAY
Evening of Astronomy, Music, Movies, Debates and Star Chat to Observe 'H' 7 p.m. at Redburn Educational Museum, 421 N. Main St., Redburn. Free. 937-393-2463. www.daytonartinstitute.org
Friday! Friday! Friday! 6 p.m. at Harris Theater, 1011 Main St., Dayton 937-228-3599. www.harris-theater.com
"The Magnificent Seven" 7 p.m. at Harris Theater, 1011 Main St., Dayton 937-228-3599. www.harris-theater.com
SATURDAY
AMINA TOURS 9 a.m. at Redburn Educational Museum, 421 N. Main St., Redburn. Free. 937-393-2463. www.daytonartinstitute.org
Great Shows 8 p.m. at Westdale at the Music Center, 501 N. Hamilton St., Dayton 937-897-3600. www.daytonartinstitute.org
Musical Theater: The Music Man at Harris Theater, 1011 Main St., Dayton 937-228-3599. www.harris-theater.com



Barrista Megan Holland wears a shirt that the staff at Winna's Coffee and Chocolates is using to promote the upcoming Mumford & Sons concert Aug. 30 and 31 at Winna's. www.daytondailynews.com

A DAY AWAY

Historic Troy offers pleasant getaway

dayton daily NEWS.COM
 By Meredith Moss Staff Writer
 Director Terry Purkie tells Troy museum visitors what they can expect to see and learn.

Miami County city has become a destination for tourists, shoppers.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME
 The city of Troy is making the most of its location near the Mumford & Sons Centermen of the Food Tour slated for Aug. 30-31. The popular English folk rock band is expected to attract a crowd of more than 20,000.

INSIDE TODAY'S LIFE & ARTS
 Read about the events and people that define Dayton's arts scene here, every Sunday.

READING
 A journal called the Heavy Feather Review began as an online publication, but it has now gone a few Dayton routes.

MUSIC
 Frate-bound vocalist Josh Groban is used to selling out, in the best sense, such as selling out venues. DG

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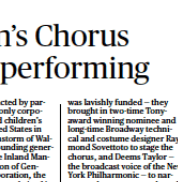
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The last group of Inland Children's Chorus graduates in 1970. Those sons of an inland actor were part of the chorus, which was sponsored and funded by Inland Manufacturing Division of General Motors through its financing in 1954 until 1970. www.daytondailynews.com

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Joel Groban will perform Tuesday at Peace Pavilion. www.daytondailynews.com

Two area actors are making their voices heard in animated features on TV and DVD. D4

D4

LIFE

Urbana actor joins Marvel universe

Clancy Brown, longtime voice of Mr. Krabs, adds Red Hulk to his credits.

By Andrew McMillin Staff Writer

URBANA — Local fans of TV cartoon *"SpongeBob SquarePants"* may identify the voice of Red Hulk from a new animated series inspired by the Marvel Comics universe better this weekend. It's obviously Mr. Krabs.

And Mr. Krabs — the prokaryote of the Krusty Krab on Nickelodeon's "SpongeBob SquarePants" — has been voiced by Urbana actor Clancy Brown for the past 14 years. Brown, 54, will provide the voice of another red-skinned character, the Hulk's new nemesis, as Mr. Krabs in a new *"Marvel vs. DC"* animated DC Comics feature that came out last week. "You can do a million characters, and you saw your cartoon on the voice of Lex Luthor in 'Superman: The Animated Series,'" he says, "but I'm coming into the franchise. They don't care how young you've been in the business. They want to make sure

they have the right actors."

Brown, who recently landed the role of the villainous Chameleon in *"The Avengers"*, said he was not surprised to be chosen for the role.

Justin Chambers, the 1989 Southeastern High School graduate who found fame in recent years with *"Grey's Anatomy,"* has gotten in on the voice-over game as well, lending his voice to the Flash in *"Justice League: The Flashpoint Paradox,"* an animated DC Comics feature that came out last week.

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"The chorus experience brought a whole world of music to me," says Clancy Brown, who was a member of the Inland Children's Chorus from 1954 to 1969.

Bob Dreng, a member of the chorus from 1957 to 1969, talks with Jerry Alred, who participated from 1951 to 1959.



Members of the Inland Children's Chorus gather for a group photo during a reunion. Inland Manufacturing, a division of General Motors from its creation in 1922 to 1998, sponsored the Chorus from 1954 to 1970. www.daytondailynews.com PHOTO BY PETER VESPA

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Another dream was to bond with the chorus members who are reunions.



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Inland Chorus members share memories of their time in the choir.

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InlandChorus.com