

Pioneer Troubadour

Official Publication of the Pioneer District November/December 2007 Volume 58, Number 5

The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

Mount Pleasant going to International

By Joe Serwach

The three-year-old **Mount Pleasant Mountain Town Chorus** will represent Pioneer District in International competition for the first time this summer when the big contest convenes in Nashville.

Thirty percent of the 42 men on stage winning the honor were

college students. The new chapter has a unique relationship with **Central Michigan University**, meeting on its campus and being directed by one of CMU's star faculty members, Professor **David "Doc" Gillingham**.

While any chapter would love that large number of students, Gillingham noted it also presents

"a big challenge because we have big turnover. Five or six of the people in this group are first-timers who have only been with us since September."

The chorus wowed the audience with tight barbershop renditions of pop songs made famous in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, starting off with the

Platters classic "Smoke gets in your eyes," and closing with a medley of the **Bee Gees'** "How do you mend a broken heart" combined with **Tony Bennett's** "I wanna be around."

The contest was one of the closest in years. Mount Pleasant scored 887 points or 73.9 percent **Please see Chorus on page 5.**

Seniors score on top

By Joe Serwach

People kept telling **Tom Conner** that he should enter the regular Quartet Contest. But the 2006 champ said his quartet only learned a couple songs and decided to instead enter the Senior Quartet contest, which they won handily.

Their score, however, the highest of the night, could have also won them the District Quartet contest as well. The members of **Resisting-A-Rest** also picked up the audience favorite awards as a survey of audience members gave the members best lead, bass, tenor and baritone.

The quartet blew the audience away with a rousing opening number of one of the **See SENIOR page 5**



(Top and Middle) Chordiology wins the District Quartet Championship

Above: **Resisting-A-Rest** won the right to represent Pioneer at Mid-Winter Convention in the Seniors contest (**Antiques Roadshow** will also go as a wild card. The new quartet scored high enough to have been on track to beat all quartets.

Photos by Joe Serwach

Chordiology 2007 Champs

By Joe Serwach

Three years ago, they finished sixth and two years ago they narrowly missed the cut, keeping them out of the finals.

The day before the 2007 convention, they talked about not coming at all. It's a good thing they did.

Chordiology gave their most powerful performance ever to win this year's **Pioneer District Quartet** contest with 1,631 points or 68 percent. The quartet had its strongest night on Friday, opening with the very upbeat, swinging "Memphis Blues" and "Tin Roof Blues."

In the finals, they came back with "A wink and a smile" and closed out with the very sentimental "Daddy's Little Girl."

For the second year in a row, **Something Big** finished second, finishing just two points behind. **Something Big** actually had the highest score of Saturday night but the third highest Friday when **Go 4 It!** placed second.

In the end, **Something Big** totaled 1,629 points or 67.9 percent while **Go 4 It** scored 1,608 points or 67 percent.

Harmony Transfer, which dedicated its final song "Always" to the wife of one of the members on their wedding anniversary, finished fourth with 1,577 points or 65.7 percent.

The young quartet **Moxxy** moved up to fifth place scoring 1,570 points or 65.4 percent.

Sixth place went to **Keynotes**, with 1,569 or 65.4 percent followed by **Interstate Chord Company** with 1,555 points or 64.8 percent and **Showtime** with 1,524 points or 63.5 percent.

Also competing were **Four Got to Shave**, **Coda Honor**, **Generations of Harmony**, **Barbershop Style** and **Grand River Serenade**.



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Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of
Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

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Rates quoted are for scanner-ready copy or properly formatted electronic files. Please send check with copy, payable to "**Pioneer District.**"

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Full page \$100
2/3 page \$75
1/2 page \$65
1/3 page \$50
Quartet-size card \$13
Quartet-size card (annual) \$55

Troubadour PUBLISHING INFORMATION

Published in January, March, May, August, and November. Copy deadline: 5th of the month prior to the month of publication. The *Troubadour* is published by the authority of the Pioneer District Association of Chapters of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc. All articles not by-lined are by the editor and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members or officers of the District. Space will be made available for opposing views relevant to any issue. Nothing will be published that is in violation of the Society's Code of Ethics.

Subscription rate for non-members: \$6.00 annually, \$1.50 for single copy. Remit check, payable to "**Pioneer District,**" to editor.

PioNet subscriptions

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I can't believe you left me for a secretary

By Joe Serwach

My favorite TV show is "Boston Legal." One of the funniest exchanges between the star and his ex girlfriend went like this:

Denny: "You left me, Shirley. Women don't leave Denny Crane. And for a secretary!"



Shirley: "It was the Secretary of Defense! My wife, who is considered the glue who holds together the University of Michigan administration (as well as our family) is a senior executive assistant. People know better than to call her a secretary."

But never fear. You can, however, call *me* your new Secretary.

After five years as Troubadour Editor, my district roles are changing just as my roles at U-M are changing.

At work, I've been promoted to a role allowing me work with my beloved alma mater, MSU. At the same time, I've enrolled in U-M's graduate program, trying to pick up a master's degree. Both are keeping me busy, leaving me with less time to devote to the Troubadour.

But I could never totally leave Barbershop

so starting in January, I'll be succeeding **Marv Skupski** as your District Secretary while **Michael Baribeau** of the **Grand Rapids Chapter** has agreed to become the new Troubadour editor. He's a great guy.

Everyone knows **Marv Skupski** is irreplaceable. Fortunately, he'll continue some of his convention roles and will continue to advise us in many ways so we are indeed a very fortunate district. You may know Micheal as a regular contributor on the PioNet, an articulate writer and the webmaster for the fantastic **Great Lakes Chorus** website.

In fact, if you want to see one of the coolest chapter web sites in all of Pioneer District, visit his web site to see what kind of good work he does from large photo galleries to online barbershop karaoke:

<http://greatlakeschorus.org/>

Some of you have asked me whether I'm leaving the state or whether The Troubadour is going away. Neither is true. I'll still be around (though working and studying more) and The Troubadour will still be around.

What we are exploring is the idea of converting some of the issues to an online publication for two reasons: one would be to save some money on rapidly rising printing and mailing costs as other districts have.

But the bigger reason is speed, getting you the news

and announcements of pending events as soon as its ready. The District fought unsuccessfully to get a 2nd class mailing permit so you could get your issue quickly. For a few years we had one on a "temporary" basis while our application was submitted and considered.

In the end, the Post Office ruled that since Pioneer doesn't directly charge dues (you actually pay them when you pay your bill to International) we couldn't prove the district was a separate organization and thus we've had to return to the non-profit mailing permit which is notoriously slow to get the publication to all parts of the state.

An online or email publication can get to you instantly. A print product must be four, eight, 12, 16 or 20 pages (divisible by four so it folds up neatly). An email or online product can be as long or as short as is needed and sent out when you need it or as news warrants.

Online and email products can include far more photos, podcasts and even videos as the technology gets better and better. And yes, extras can be printed fairly easily for those who don't have computers.

I stress that this hasn't been decided yet but is simply being explored and considered.

Michael or **Rick Anderson** would love to hear your ideas. And as your new secretary, I will be happy to help in any way can.

But I don't do shorthand.

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Outgoing President Bloch reviews the past two years

By **Raleigh Bloch**

Pioneer District President

Since this is my last column as the Pioneer District President, I thought it might be appropriate to look back on the past two years.

You'll recall, we started off with the district's concern that **Bush League** was about to fold. We established a blue ribbon task force and promptly took a survey, to determine what our members were looking for, in their barbershop hobby. The survey response



was absolutely great. Not only did our members respond in overwhelming numbers, they also gave great input. They wanted:

-- FUN.

-- TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR HOBBY.

-- THEY WANTED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SING IN A QUARTET.

Fortunately, we were able to use that information to save Bush League. We also used it to establish a new position on the district staff, called "Quartet Promotion."

Dan Bezaire has filled that position. **Joe Queen** has also started the Michigan Harmony Brigade. Their web site indicates considerable

interest and it will have its first meeting in 2008.

The survey information was shared with the entire district. It was also shared with all District Presidents. Specific information was shared with the Society Board and I believe it, along with my insisting, was instrumental in reactivating the Program VP position.

As a result, COTS will have a Program VP track. You will recall, at our Spring Convention, I urged the chapters to add that position to their roster of officers. Hopefully this action will help in putting more fun in our hobby.

The Standing Ovation Program has been under utilized in our district. Each chapter has the opportunity of having a SOP reviewer at their show, when they request show clearance. The District Secretary does this when the chapter requests show clearance.

Bud Leonard is our new SOP Chairmen and we'd like to try something different. Instead of giving a review of the show, we'd like to give the chapter a pre-show review. That way we can help you put on a better show. We'll also review the actual show as well, to see how it went. So I urge you to

request a SOP review for your upcoming show. You'll be better for it.

As for Conventions, we are trying to do some things to make them more interesting. You may have noticed the mini contest, where the audience selected their favorite costume or their favorite Bass, etc. Also we invited judges who can put on interesting classes for all to attend. Like in the fall when Bill Rashleigh not only directed our Joe Barbershop Chorus, but also put a on a class on how to sing better.

I've already talked to **Joe Liles** about coming to our Spring Convention to put on his famous "Tune it or Die" class.

Some Districts are loosing money on their conventions and are investigating combining their convention with neighboring districts. Pioneer District has one of the lowest cost registration fees and we'd like to keep it that way.

I'm not saying we won't ever have to increase it, but for next year we are still holding the line. The better attendance we have, the easier it is to keep our fees low.

In closing, I want to say thank you for putting up with me as your President and thank you to all those who made a pleasant

Michael Baribeau named Troubadour editor

By **Rick Anderson**

Pioneer District Marketing and Public Relations Director

The **Pioneer District** would like to send heartfelt thanks to **Joe Serwach** for serving as the Editor and the chief staff writer/photographer for our newsletter, **The Troubadour**.

Joe has selflessly volunteered his time, creativity and resources on the Troubadour since early 2003 when he took over from then-editor **Gary Simon**.

His work has helped serve as a historical documentation of the trials and achievements of the district. I recently looked back through some of Joe's work and there are moments captured that will forever live in our hearts.

They stir up memories of past conventions, quartets, chorus competitions, and dear friends of old.

Who can forget the elation of **Power Play** winning the 2003 International Quartet Championship in Montreal!? We owe a great debt of gratitude to Joe Serwach for giving so much of himself to the barbershop

community.

We also thank his family for allowing him the precious time he invested.

I would also like to announce that **Michael Baribeau**, of the **Grand Rapids Chapter**,



Rick (right) honors a surprised Joe at Convention.
Photo by Michael Baribeau

has volunteered to take over as Troubadour editor starting in 2008.

Michael is currently the webmaster of the Great Lakes Chapter website, and is a frequent contributor to the PioNet.

As a relatively new barbershopper, he brings a fresh perspective and tremendous enthusiasm.

We look to ways to improve the timely

delivery and reduce the rising costs of publishing the Troubadour in 2008.

An electronic version of The Troubadour will be launching, and we are currently investigating ways to best support those without Internet connectivity.

At the Fall 2007 convention, a survey of the membership was initiated. If you didn't get a chance to submit a survey, please contact your chapter leadership or contact me directly. Look for changes in the near future.

We are also seeking additional writers and photographers to contribute to The Troubadour.

Many hands make light work, and we value your contributions. Please join me in welcoming Michael to his new position.

A new Pioneer Marketing and Public Relations yahoo e-mail group has been launched. This is a forum set up to discuss issues related to chapter and district marketing, public relations, websites, newsletters, press releases and all forms of internal and external communication regarding the barbershop art form.

I hope you are willing and able to join us. Your involvement will help define how we, as barbershoppers in the Pioneer District, see ourselves and are seen by others in the community! Please contact me if you'd like to join. Email Rick at: Randerson@tdktca.com

CHORUS: Mt. Pleasant slips past Macomb

Continued from Page 1

to beat the **Macomb Guardians of Hamony**, which have represented Pioneer at International for the past five years in a row.

Macomb scored 881 points or 73.4 percent, trailing by just six points. Macomb strengthened and improved their elaborate Christmas set they debuted in competition last fall.

Under the direction of gold medalists **Mike and Jack Slamka**, the set was full of choreography, great humor and performing skills, clearly one of the most entertaining show packages Pioneer has seen in recent memory. Macomb put 49 men on stage, more than any of the 14 competing choruses.

Third place went to **Lansing**, which scored 849 points or 70.8 percent. Grand Rapids followed with 821 points or 68.4 percent and a Plateau 2 Championship with **Detroit-Oakland** finishing fifth with 815 points or 67.9 percent.

Don Slamka's growing 44-member **Hillsdale** chorus scored 794 points or 66.2 percent followed by **Grosse Pointe**, with 733 points or 61.1 percent and **Kalamazoo**, with 711 or 59.9 percent, enough to win the "most improved chorus" honor. With 10 fewer men on stage, **Battle Creek** -- with just 17 men -- tied Kalamazoo with 711 points or 59.9 percent and became the Plateau 3 Champion. **Holland** rounded out the top 10 with 687 points or 57.3 percent.

Also competing were **Traverse City**, Plateau 4 Champion **Huron Valley**,

Michiana Metro and Windsor.

Photos by Michael Baribeau



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Showtime captures Bush League trophy

By Erv Erickson

On Friday, August 24 the quartets **Border Boyz, Generations of Harmony, Good Timing, Havin' A Blast, Northbound Sound, Showtime** and **Singing With Dad** made their way to **Gaylord** for a weekend of coaching, contesting and fellowship.

Serving as coaches for the Friday evening "Masters Class" and individual quartet coaching following the contest on Saturday morning was **Fermata Nowhere**, our 2006 Pioneer District Quartet Champs.

They were accompanied with coaching duties, by our Judges for the contest, **Al Fisk, Mike O'Donnell** and **Ken Fisher**. The Contest Administrator was **Ron Eubank**.

During the evening "Men of Music" show,

the Bush League 2006 Trophy winner **Something Big** performed and presented the traveling Trophy to the new champs, **Showtime**.

The new champs are from the **Grand Rapids** area and are a combination of Tenor – **Jim Johnson**, Lead – **Tom Weidner**, Bari – **Wayne Hodgson**, and Bass – **Al Smith**.

The **Gaylord Harmonic Meisters** have received many positive comments from the participating quartets, Judges and Coaches regarding the fellowship and benefits received by being a part of the **Bush League** experience.

Several suggestions were also received which could make Bush League an even more valuable venue for up and coming quartets in the Pioneer District.

It is not too soon to start thinking **Bush League 2008**.

A date has not yet been set, but each quartet contact man will receive notice of the dates in the near future, to allow plenty of time for planning your trip north.



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SENIOR:

Love them and the world is theirs

Continued from page 1. most difficult versions of the elaborate "Love me and the World is Mine," the chapter theme song of Connor's **Grosse Pointe Chapter**.

The crowd was on its feet with a rousing standing ovation.

The quartet maintained that level with a "Heart of my Heart" medley that

racked up only one fewer point than the opening number. They wound up scoring 863 points or 71.9 percent while the 2007 District champs scored 824 points on their best night, winding up with 68 percent.

Antiques Roadshow, which has represented Pioneer District in past years at Mid-

Winter Convention, won a wild card slot and will represent Pioneer along-side Resisting-A-Rest. Antiques Roadshow scored 783 points or 65.3 percent.

Also competing in the seniors contest were **Generations of Harmony** and **Four Wheel Drive**.

Frank Fortier(Lead) Tom Smeltzer (Bass)
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All event passes may be purchased at the convention registration desk located in the McCamly Plaza Hotel. Also, single event registrations can be purchased at the convention registration desk located in the Headquarters Hotel. Single events tickets are \$15 each. Children 12 and under are admitted FREE! Each member of a competing quartet or chorus MUST be registered for an all-events pass. Failure to do so will disqualify the quartet or chorus from the contest.

REFUND POLICY: REGISTRATION FEES WILL BE REFUNDED TO PERSONS CANCELING IN WRITING PRIOR TO THE 11:00am OPENING ON FRIDAY

District convention facilities are handicap accessible. Please indicate any special requirements you need to fully participate. _____

Photos by
Michael Baribeau



The Making of a Winning Team: How Chordiology joined the elite Quartet Champs Assn.

It's Monday, and cloud 9 is starting - just a little - to dissipate. What an incredible weekend - it's one I'll never forget. Guess which direction my love-hate relationship with competition leaned this weekend?

Chordiology has been a registered quartet since 1990, so we've been around the block more than once. Most of you know that we lost **Kelly Brummett** (part-time Chordiology tenor, part-time

Chordiology baritone, and full-time amazing singer), a few years ago to cancer.

The thing is, we still believe that Kelly is with us, because we laugh (and sometimes cry) about him at every rehearsal, and I mean every rehearsal. Someone brings up his name, usually in some sophomore context (we are, after all, Chordiology) and we start telling Kelly stories.

And besides, Cliff is slowly turning into Kelly

- just ask him about the morons driving faster than him and the idiots driving slower than him. And then thank God that you never drove anywhere with Kelly!

It's been a long journey. We've been to weekend barbershop schools and we've been to Harmony Quartet College. We've been coached by multiple talented men and women. We've changed our style, from comedy

Please see Champs, Page 9

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CHAMPS: How Chordiology made it into Pioneer's QCA

Continued from Page 8

to serious, and then from serious to a bit of both. We've struggled with in-tune singing since the beginning. We've spent years taking voice lessons (thanks, Dr. Meehan), and we've coached each other.

While all this work has, according to a panel of judges, paid off, for me (and us), it's really about the journey.

Basically, it's been a blast. We laugh, we talk, we sing, and, sometimes, we cry.

For Chordiology, the laugh part dominates, and while it often interferes with the singing part, it's really what's kept us together. Yes we love to sing, but I think we love to laugh just as much – and sometimes our singing makes us laugh!

After all, how important are 6th place finishes (we owned 6th place) and not making the cut compared to the death of a fellow Chordilogist, the death of a parent, and a seriously ill first child, all of which happened during our journey?

We went to the 2007 contest to do our best. We went for a reality check.

Yes, we wanted to win, but come on, we've done this before, and we had no delusions of grandeur. We did not and never did care that much if we won, as long as we did our best.

Our fear, put in **Dan Bezaire's** words, was not to "lay a giant turd on the stage."

In the moments before our name was called, I was hoping for 4th or 5th place, not wanting to own our usual 6th.

Then, I heard the word "Chordiology" and for an instant, time stopped, and my mind raced.

What did he say?

He said

"Chordiology."

He did. I heard it.

I did hear it, didn't I?

Cliff looked at me with a face that I'll never forget (put that joke aside).

Pure joy mixed with disbelief, eyes full of water, face pleading with me to tell him that what he just heard was true. It was.

And I've been assured that it's too late for the judges to realize some mistake

– Chordiology is the 2007 Pioneer District Quartet Champion. Nice ring, don't you think?

On Saturday afternoon, I sat down next to a stranger to watch the chorus competition. In between choruses, this guy I never met before leaned toward me and said, "We've missed you guys on the stage the past couple years. I'm glad you're back."

He was so sincere, that I believed him, and I was flabbergasted that anyone could miss our 6th place performances. Then it hit me, he's a barbershopper.

The amazing brotherhood, the



Hospitality: One of the best parts of convention.

Photo by Michael Baribeau

unending good will, the appreciation that we have of this very difficult craft is remarkable.

And it really is sincere.

That guys could "miss" our 6th place efforts says a lot about our society, our district, and our members.

Did I mention that this hobby (sorry, Dr. Henry) - that this - brotherhood - is a blast?

This weekend just happened to be a zillion megaton nuclear kind of blast.

Thank you Pioneer,

**Dave Spizarny
 Bass, Chordiology**

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**SPRING PIONEER DISTRICT CONVENTION APRIL 25-27, 2008
REQUEST FOR HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS
BATTLE CREEK CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU**

Please fill out this form and mail to the Battle Creek Convention and Visitors Bureau at 77 E. Michigan Ave., Battle C MI 49017 or fax to 269-962-2240 attention Greg Deau.
One form for EACH room must be submitted.

Please indicate your preference:

<u>Hotel:</u>	<u>Single</u>	<u>Double</u>
McCamly Plaza Hotel(Headquarters Hotel)		
Regular Guestroom	\$95	\$95
Holiday Inn	\$95	\$95
Amerihost Inn (downtown)	\$95	\$95
Ramada Inn	\$70	\$70

**Room Rates do not reflect 11% state and local taxes.

To guarantee your room, please provide the credit card information below. If credit card information is not provided, your room will **NOT** be reserved.

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Please Circle: VISA MC AE DS Expiration Date _____

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One room will be reserved for: (print clearly in pen)

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Date of Departure: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ E-mail: _____

Day Phone: () _____ - _____ Name of other guest(s) in room: _____

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Please indicate if you are physically challenged or need special requirements:

I would like to receive my acknowledgment via _____ e-mail _____ fax _____ mail

Please list the fax or e-mail you would like your acknowledgment sent to _____

Windsor loses George Spidy after 50 years

Windsor Report
 By **Bill Strong**

Well, the love in is over and we've just come off another successful Fall competition.

Congratulations to our Quartet Champions **Chordiology** and to our Chorus winners, **Mount Pleasant**. Both groups are very deserving of their first place finishes.

Mount Pleasant will represent us well at International. And to those who didn't win, well, it was fun trying and better luck next time.

It's always an interesting debate after competition as to why we didn't do better but it still remains, that to compete is fun and we always strive to get better.

Our heartfelt thanks to our Director **Dan Bezaire** for the hard work he put in preparing us for competition. Our chorus didn't deliver but it was not for a lack of effort on his behalf. Keep working on us Dan.

On a sad note we announce the death of one of Windsor's long term members, **George Spidy**. George passed away in July after a short illness. He sang a great Baritone part and was a fixture in our Chapter for over 50 years.

Plans are progressing for our annual **Send Off** show which, by the time this column is being read, will be right around the corner. Mark your calendars for Friday June 14th 2008.

This show is one of the high lights of the Barbershop year and is a great way to support our singers as they head off to competition. It's also a great night to bring out a guest.

Congratulations go out to our Chapter members Dan Bezaire and **Bud Leonard** as they assume their new committee positions with the District. Dan doing "Quartet Promotion" and Bud is doing the "Standing O" program.

They will both do an excellent job. See ya'll in Battle Creek in the spring.

Toby Wally

Party of Four

Contact - Toby Shaver
 (734) 578-2170
 partyof4rocks@yahoo.com

Kevin Mark



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An official publication of the Pioneer District Association of Chapters of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.



"Showtime"

Barbershop Quartet

Jim Johnson - Tenor
Tom Weidner - Lead

Wayne Hodgson - Baritone
Al Smith - Bass

Jim Johnson (616) 364-7183 e-mail - jamescj@sbcglobal.net

Bruce Scott Mike Craig

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CALENDAR: Upcoming events

December 8
Macomb Chapter Show

February 16, 2008
Power Play's Farewell Show

February 22-23, 2008
Detroit-Oakland Chapter Show

March 8
Lansing Chapter Show

April 25-27
District Convention - Battle Creek

May 3
Wayne Chapter Show

September 13
Kalamazoo Chapter Show

October 17-19
District Convention - Battle Creek

October 25
Rochester Chapter Show

November 1
Pontiac-Waterford Chapter Show

Chapter Locations

