

The Croix Chordsmen Chorus— *Known for Their Music but Offering So Much More!*

By Walt Ogburn, Executive Vice
President, Croix Chordsmen Chorus

The Croix Chordsmen Chorus was formed in 1951 in River Falls, Wisconsin and was one of over 1,000 Men's Barbershop Choruses in the U.S. Over the years the chorus has changed and adapted to the times, but one thing that hasn't changed is the love of a cappella harmonies sung by these men.

Membership has generally been in the 30-60-men range, and the ages have typically ranged from the 20s to the 90s. Currently the chorus has about 40 members from across that age range.

The chorus practices weekly, but they recognize that not every member can attend every practice, so they encourage members to attend as often as possible. They even have a few members who sing with the Croix Chordsmen in the summer and sing with another chorus near their winter home.

The repertoire consists of traditional barbershop, patriotic, show tunes, gospel, and contemporary all sung without accompaniment in four-part harmony.

Even though the members traditionally joined because they love to sing, they have learned that they get far more benefits than just an opportunity to sing. Recent research has confirmed that being a part of a group like this provides many physical and mental health benefits. These are especially important as men age, and move from raising families, to empty nesters, and on to retirement. These benefits include strengthening cardiovascular health, stimulating brain-soothing endorphins, reducing stress, increasing self-confidence, improving energy levels, enhancing cognition and memory, and building social connections. In general, being in a men's chorus can produce a sense of belonging and purpose.

The Croix Chordsmen Chorus understands there are physical and mental benefits from singing with a chorus, so we decided to ask a few of our members to tell us how long they've been singing with the chorus—and why they continue. Here are a few of their responses:



Photo by Croix Chordsmen Chorus



Photo by Wayne's World of Graphics



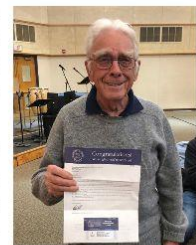
Photo by Croix Chordsmen Chorus

Jon from Spring Valley, Wisconsin has been with the chorus for seven years and he said, "I keep coming back for two reasons: First I love singing the our-part harmonies, and second, I've made many new friends from various backgrounds, and I know they all 'have my back.'"

Judd from Stillwater responded very succinctly, "I've been singing 54 years and I keep doing it because of fellowship, joy of singing, and companionship."

Steve from Woodbury shared a little more of his background, "I joined 10 years ago after I retired. I had very little singing experience prior to that. No high school or college chorus, only two years of singing in a church choir, but that experience exposed me to the joy of participating in four-part harmony. I joined the Chordsmen looking for more chorus singing, but I had no idea if I could sing well enough to contribute. The members were welcoming and patient with me, and I gained confidence in my singing to the point that I eventually started singing in quartets. I keep coming back because it feels like a family of good men and we sing great music that ranges from 50s to 80s rock and roll, Broadway tunes, and gospel."

My personal favorite story comes from Bill in White Bear Lake. Bill will turn 99 in March and has been a member for only two years. Bill was invited by his neighbor to join us, and three guys drive from White Bear Lake together every week.



When asked why he goes through the effort every week he responded, "Because it's one of the great parts of my life. Music has always been a big part of my life. And at my age, to have this opportunity, every Tuesday night to sing with a bunch of great guys and a great director is beyond anything I had ever imagined in my life. You know, at this stage of my life. Hanging out with the guys is always fun."

The Croix Chordsmen rehearse at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Stillwater every Tuesday evening at 7pm. All rehearsals are open to the public. If you aren't certain about singing, just stop by and enjoy the music and talk to some of the members about why they sing.

Join us Saturday, April 6 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater at 3pm for our *Harmony On The High Seas Spring Show*, and then at 5:30pm we'll have a Cabaret Show at Grand Event Center in Stillwater. Check our website croixchordsmen.org or email us at tgsemail@gmail.com for more information, or to purchase tickets. Do you know someone who could appreciate these benefits? Please pass this article on to them.