

River Ramblings

Editor - Jeffrey Grimmer

Leadership Academy River Falls Wisconsin

Friday noon, all the excitement was beginning to build....but 1st, let's have some of that great food. The first meal was great and all the desserts available were way too tempting. My first class: Quartet rehearsal tips, moderated by Judd Orff, was well done. Next, was how to MC. We had a number of students who had done MC work for their Chorus and also their Quartet. From this course, there were 2 MCs picked, that introduced St Croix Crossing and Grand Design, later on Friday evening. Both MCs did a superb job and the entertainment from the quartets was outstanding.....lots of standing ovations from the crowd. Following my MC class, the end of my afternoon, consisted of: Vocal Production from Jim Emery. My last class of the day was geared toward someone who was trying to understand the basics of reading music. That class, given earlier Friday, was attended by over 30 students. The late evening class I attended had 11 students. The day was very late, I was feeling the effects of my cold/flu symptoms. Most of the students could read music already, but a very patient instructor, Jim Richards persisted in trying to give me knowledge I would absorb. In the end, I was able to understand some of the rules and exceptions that most of the Riverblenders already know. The class was successful

for my needs. Saturday began with a great breakfast, followed by a Presidents classroom 8-12. The balance of my day was highlighted by Mike Scott and the topic of: Supercharging your membership. Mike gave us the "magic question" to ask when approaching a prospect for singing. Near days end Matt Hall of Grand Design taught us Tags for 90 minutes.....great fun. Saturday evenings classes were modified to allow members to view the Vikings and Packers game. Some of us (Vikings fans) thought that was a waste of time, but then I suppose the Packer fans were all seeing it differently. The weekend was well worth my time. Just as always, the Riverblenders reputation preceded them. Lots of Riverblenders were in key positions to make this weekend a success; Our 2013 Land O' Lakes District President Chuck Schubbe, Thom & Tim & Arv were all instrumental in keeping the Riverblenders visible, but more importantly, putting together a first-rate Leadership Academy. Thanks to all of you in attendance and thanks to the valuable contributions made by all. A special thanks to Grand Design for their great entertainment Friday evening. Great food, great classes, great singing friends, great food. Every chapter member (not just leaders) needs to experience this weekend.

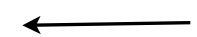
Ron Meyer - President



The "Riverblenders" at the LO'L Academy Ron Meyer, Doug Peterson, Thom Schubbe, Bryan Kuisle, Jacob Ritter, Grand Design, the new LO'L board containing Thom Schubbe, Arvid Zenk & Chuck Schubbe



2013
Leadership
Academy
River Falls, WI



2013
LO'L Board



More Photos From The Academy



Chuck Schubbe

Jacob Ritter

Doug Peterson

Thom Schubbe

Ryan Kuisle

Riverblenders Paying and Giving

Ron Meyer and Bruce Gray presented two checks to the Loyola High Schools Superintendent, Shelly Schultz. One check was for our annual rent, another was a charitable donation.



Ron Meyer and Stan Bruss delivered a check to Christ the King. Ron is presenting the check to Pastor John Peterson. Christ the King is looking forward to being our "summer home" again this year.

3-Eagles Offer Free Media Seminar

On Tuesday, January 22, at 9:00am, Bailey Blethen and Jeff Grimmer were welcomed to the local 3-Eagles radio station(s) on Lookout Drive (right by the worlds biggest Christmas Tree). We were welcomed by the staff and by David Calabrese the Senior Market Manager for Gabriel Media. We had a very good seminar and were presented a plethora of data on the use of radio to promote the Riverblenders. We will be looking at the data and trying it out this year. Thanks to Three Eagles Communications!



Jeff, Kelly (3-Eagles Staff), Bailey

OUR DIRECTOR SPEAKS:

Hey Gentlemen!

Don't think it pretentious, but I wanted to tell you all a little bit about my past in choral music and what brought me to the Riverblenders. My life has been a crazy trip and has some low points on the roller coaster, but those moments have made me who I am today and have brought me to all of you, so I am thankful for them. If you want the short-short version of this story, it's that reality truly is stranger than fiction!

When I was a freshman in high school, I was pretty musically motivated. My father was the choral director at my high school and I was involved with several vocal ensembles during my time there. One fateful day, a group called Tonic Sol-Fa came to my school, they were 5 part pop a cappella singing tunes like Cecilia and Brown Eyed Girl with an awesome stage show. It was the first time I had seen grown men singing music like that!

I enjoyed the concert, but didn't think much of it until a couple of my buddies came up to me the next day and said "Dude, we want to do that, and we want you on board." I thought it sounded like fun, so we went to my dad and asked for some music. He pulled out "My Wild Irish Rose" and "Aura Lee", and we spent the next two months working on those two songs. We were not good. But, we were enjoying ourselves, and it gave us a great reason to hang out and laugh it up. Finally, we landed a gig! We performed for the "Red Hat" club of about 15 old ladies at the Platte County Museum in Columbus, NE, and sang our two songs. Again, we were not good.

But how they loved us! Those ladies just showered us with praise and we felt like we were on top of the world. From then on we were hooked. We started singing lots of different styles and pushed ourselves really hard. We would practice several hours a week and were constantly pestering my dad to work with us. And in the end, it was all worth it. When we graduated high school, we knew over 50 songs, had performed hundreds of gigs, had produced two CD's in a studio and sold hundreds of copies, and we saved enough money to pay for my first semester of college. Ten years after the conception of that group, we got together and

had a reunion concert for all of our friends and family. One of our guys drove 14 hours from Colorado to be there. It was an experience I will never forget.

But of course, all good things must come to an end. I graduated high school and began my undergraduate studies at Doane College in Crete, Nebraska. I knew about SPEBSQSA at that point, but only that it was a barbershop group and that it had the BEST ACRONYM EVER (I'm still sore about that, by the way). There were certainly plenty of talented guys to sing with at Doane, and I knew I wanted to be in a quartet, but I was looking for something a little more...my high school quartet was wonderful and was hilariously entertaining, but our vocal performance was always at about a B level. I wanted to hit the A level!!!

Enter Larry Monson. Larry was in his 12th year as the director of choral activities at Doane College, and his coaching and guidance was just what I was looking for. Eventually, I and three other guys formed a collegiate quartet called Deluge, and Larry coached us to the Central States District Collegiate Championship in 2003, along with two trips to International in Montreal and Louisville. Deluge was almost completely focused on the contest aspects of SPEBSQSA, and so we devoted most of our rehearsal time to our contest pieces. We practiced hard and got pretty good!

But those constant rehearsals were not all great. In our efforts, we became pretty aware of our own shortcomings. Can any other quartets relate to that?! While we were good and confident in our sound, our consistency was not where it should have been and we struggled with it for the life of the quartet.

Going into the 2004 Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Contest, we were ranked 5th overall with a score of 75.3. We were very excited to compete, and Larry made some very difficult special arrangements to be there for us. We were so determined to do well and win a medal; we could feel it in our bones. That year was the year the Vocal Spectrum won the CBQC, and so all the attention of the contest was on them, but we were determined to make an impression!

DIRECTORS COMMENTS CONTINUED:

Ninth place out of 22, with a score of 72.5 or so. We were devastated. I took it particularly hard, as many people had told us we had the potential to medal in this contest. I'll never forget talking to Larry after the contest and at some point, in his condolence of me, he said that the judges were trained to be consistent and judge us the same as if we were in any contest. In my wholly frustrated voice I said, "But I thought we did better than we did at districts!!" He didn't have an answer for that because he was sparing my feelings, but that simply wasn't the case. I learned a lot about Barbershop Harmony Society scoring and the effect it can have on you that day. I allowed that experience to ruin the entire rest of the contest for me, and in retrospect I realize how significant that was to forming my opinions now. Do BHS scores matter? Yes. Are they the most important thing? To some people, yes! Should you let those feelings get in the way of the relationships that you make along the way? No, and I am so thankful to all of the guys in my quartet and to Larry for that experience. Even though I felt all that pain, I never would have felt that way had I not cared so much and not pushed myself to be as good as I can be for many years.

Then, in 2005, through mutual connections, two of Deluge's members were invited to join a group that was heading off to Tokyo Disneyland to perform barbershop quartet music full-time! What an exciting opportunity...but it didn't include me!! I sang baritone in Deluge, and the needed parts were bass and tenor. God had different plans for me. I ended up beginning my music-teaching career at the beginning of the 2005 school year. Of course I was envious, but at the time the idea of leaving all my family and friends was a bit daunting. I had a great school year of living with a great friend and joining some local choruses in Lincoln, NE. But the idea of performing full time always lingered in the back of my mind...if my buddies could do it, so could I!

On my 24th birthday, I got the email that would change my life. A trio of guys in Orlando had contacted my friends in Tokyo looking for a bass, and my friends referenced me to them. When they contacted me, they had no work lined up...they

simply needed a good fourth member to get started and begin auditions and performances. As I look back on it now, it almost seems insane! They wanted me to give up my life working full-time as a music teacher at a good job, living in a great town, leave all my family and friends and move to Orlando to join a quartet of men that I had never met! It would require me to work part-time while the quartet practiced and looked for work while trying to pay college loans and find a new social life. I had an aunt and uncle living in Orlando at the time, but that was my only connection! You would have to be crazy to go for that deal, right?

Two weeks later, I told my administration I was not coming back the following year. I packed up my stuff, got myself a new haircut, and moved to Orlando. I knew this was my chance to get that job in Tokyo. I wanted it BAD. Everyone always tells you to try crazy stuff when you are young, right? I lived with my aunt and uncle for the first month while I looked for a place to live, sleeping on my niece's bedroom, complete with pink bows on the wallpaper and a Barbie dollhouse.

The next eight months ended up including some of the toughest and most gratifying moments of my life. It would take another article the size of this one to go over it all. Between the quartet, several unique part-time jobs, loving relatives, swindling roommates, horrible auditions, an amazing church, and unbelievable coincidences, I probably learned more life lessons in Orlando than I had in the rest of my life leading up to that time. But I will never forget this next series of events. It was absolute divine intervention.

I had just returned from a surprise visit to see my family in Nebraska, and I was at rehearsal with my quartet. Things between my quartet and I were not always good, and at this particular time I was feeling unappreciated and that we were not on a successful course. At the end of the rehearsal, the lead of our quartet told the group that over the holiday, he had met with the casting director of the newly created Hong Kong Disneyland during an audition and that he had been tapped to join a new quartet going to work in Hong Kong. It was the dream job that I had given up my life for, and I wasn't going.

DIRECTORS COMMENTS CONTINUED:

After we parted from that rehearsal, I broke down. I have only really cried twice in my life as far as I can remember, and this was one of them. I had worked so hard and wanted it so much, and because I wasn't in the right place at the right time, I had missed it. The quartet would break up, and I would most likely return to Nebraska with my tail between my legs. There would be no magical story; no payoff for my sacrifice. I decided to go to the gym at my housing complex and try to pull myself together. It was as I was on the treadmill that, all at once, God convicted me of how selfish I was being. God had allowed me to connect with relatives that loved me like a son and brother, find a church that was a huge blessing and family when I needed one, given me the means to live in Orlando and pursue a dream where I lived a life like I had never experienced, and taken care of me despite all of my own short-comings. My attitude immediately changed, and I knew what I had to do. I had acted like a jerk at rehearsal, and didn't even congratulate my friend who had been selected for HK. I picked up the phone, apologized to him, and congratulated him whole-heartedly. He had gone above and beyond and worked hard to get what he had accomplished, and I was proud of him.

Two weeks later, a miracle happened. The casting director who had selected my friend called him up and said that the bass he had hired for Hong Kong backed out of the quartet and that he was looking for a reference. When I received the call, I was elated. It was as if I had lost 100 pounds all at once!! I was going to Hong Kong Disneyland to be a full-time Dapper Dan!!! I am convinced that I was rewarded for my obedience to God's conviction, and I will never forget that. My life has been full of incredible blessings, but that one took the cake!

I spent the next 13 months working for Disney as a full-time singer and performer. It was amazing. Once again, it would take another article to talk about all of those experiences. Living in a foreign land, being surrounded by the beautiful and quirky people working for Disney, working in a quartet every day, and being away from home for that amount of time were all once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Needless to say, I super-charged my performance ability and quartet experience there

and picked up a vast repertoire of music, not to mention I got to sing and work with some of the world's greatest performers! I even got to be Santa in Mickey's Santa house! But, as always, good things must come to an end. While I loved working for Disney, the life of a full-time performer was not for me. I find great pleasure in investing in a community and making an impact on those around me. That is hard to do when you are always moving! Once again I was blessed and was selected to be a graduate student at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, MO. Here, I was able to work with some great young people and focus my teaching abilities while on course to receive my masters degree in choral conducting. I also met some of my most important mentors! It was an exciting time with lots of great challenges!

Eventually, it was time to look for work, and the path seemed clear to move back to Nebraska and re-start my old life, equipped with an arsenal of new skills and experiences! However, it was at this time that my brother David was getting ready to move up to Minneapolis, MN to begin his schooling at North Central University. I thought it would be a good idea to send some applications to Minnesota schools in an effort to be closer to my brother so that he and I could share the experience together. As God would have it, I landed the job in Waseca, and my life in Minnesota began! I joined the world-renown Great Northern Union who had once booked Deluge for a show back in my college days. There I met Doug Peterson, and the rest, as they say, is history!

Thank you for taking the time to read my little autobiography, gentlemen! Isn't it amazing how the choices we make in our lives define us? If it hadn't been for one concert way back in 1997, I would never have had the opportunity to be your director! The experiences we get to share with others in our lives are amazing, and the people we share them with are even more precious. What's great is that this is just the beginning! I can't wait to see what is in store for us as we form our own lasting memories!

January 12, 2013 Jacob Ritter
Director of the Mankato Riverblenders



2013 Youth In Harmony

The annual Youth In Harmony Festival is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Valley Sweet Adelines and the Riverblenders Choruses. Funding for the event comes from several sources. The largest donator is "Prairie Lakes Arts Council. The Sweet Adelines have written the grant to this organization for the past 2 events and wrote it again for this years festival. "This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund". The Riverblenders write grants to the Harmony Foundation each year to help with expenses. Other donations are made by local businesses and friends. Please take notice of them at the bottom of this years concert program and if you have the time, call and thank them.

We invited 18 schools to this years festival they are; Belle Plaine High School, Madelia High School, Waterville-Elysian-Morristown High School, Mankato East High School, Mankato West

High School, Loyola High School, Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, Byron High School, St. Peter High School,

The Festival does not happen all by itself. It takes the time and dedication of quit a few people. The planning committee consists of; Carol Grimmer, Jeff Grimmer, Mary Lou Kudela, Pat Potzler, Pat Prange, Bruce Gray, Ruth Hall, and Jacob Ritter. This group sits down and irons out what has to be done and then each of them volunteers to do whatever is necessary to make for a great event.

We also have a group that visits some of the invited schools to show and explain what "Barbershop Singing" is all about. The schools visited this year were: Byron High School, Mankato East High School, Mapleton High School, WEM High School, and Madelia High School.

The people that volunteered are shown below in the various photographs. They took a lot of time out of their lives to visit the schools and promote the Festival so when you see any of them, let them know that they are appreciated.



L-R Jeff Grimmer, Byron Music Director Susan Braun, Wayne Hughes, Patti Dykema, Ellen Gruhot, Carol Grimmer, Kris Rykhus, Dennis Schilling, Stan Bruss, Carol Grimmer, Chuck Schubbe

Jeff Grimmer, Madelia Music Director Jessica Conover

Carol Grimmer, Ellen Gruhot, Maple River Music Director Sandy Stenzel, Kris Rykhus, Patti Dykema, Jeff Grimmer,



L-R Wayne Hughes, Carol Grimmer, Jeff Grimmer, Mickey Christensen, WEM Music Director Jacob Ritter, Dar Loiselle, Ronnie Leech, Byron Norell



L-R Carol Grimmer, Doug Peterson, Jeff Grimmer, Mankato East Music Director Robin Hughes, Byron Norell, Wayne Hughes

Third Annual Youth In Harmony Festival

Date of Event: January 26, 2013

The Minnesota Valley Sweet Adelines in conjunction with the Mankato Riverblenders present their third Annual Youth In Harmony Festival.

The event will take place January 26, 2013 at Crossview Covenant Church in North Mankato.

The following High Schools were invited to the festival:

Belle Plaine

Cleveland

JWP

Le Sueur / Henderson

Madelia

Mankato West

Minnesota Valley Lutheran

St. Clair

Sibley East

Byron

Immanuel Lutheran

Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial

Loyola

Mankato East

Maple River

Nicollet

St. Peter

WEM

The students day will start at 9:00am, they will learn two songs in their respective choruses (girls; boys) and one song together, along with choreography! The day will culminate with a **free** concert at 4:00 P.M.

featuring the Festival Choruses, as well as the Sweet Adelines, Riverblenders, and their quartets. Students will receive lunch and a T-shirt, which will also serve as the 'costume' for the performance.

The public is invited to the **free** concert.

Clinicians will be Jacob Ritter, director of the Riverblenders Chorus, Mankato, MN, and Carol Grimmer, director of the Minnesota Valley Sweet Adelines Chorus, Mankato, MN.

"This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund"



The 2013 Youth In Harmony Boys & Girls Chorus

More Youth In Harmony



The 2013 Youth In Harmony Combined Chorus



Young Women In Harmony Chorus



Young Men In Harmony Chorus



Sunny Side Up

Soul Purpose

Fourtuosity

MAGIC

Sunday Punch



Youth In Harmony Committee: L/R - Jacob Ritter, Bruce Gray, Arvid Zenk, Pat Prange, Pat Potzler, Carol Grimmer, Jeff Grimmer, Ruth Hall, Mary Lou Kudela, guest Stan Bruss

Nice To Know

Gentlemen,

February 14th is rapidly approaching. If you have never thought of singing in a quartet, give it another thought. How about organizing a quartet for "Singing Valentines", and I'm sure would change your mind. I know I did.

The opportunity to give to someone the gift of song, to a complete stranger is something you won't forget. The look of surprise on the recipients face is something you won't forget anytime soon either. And, what better way to

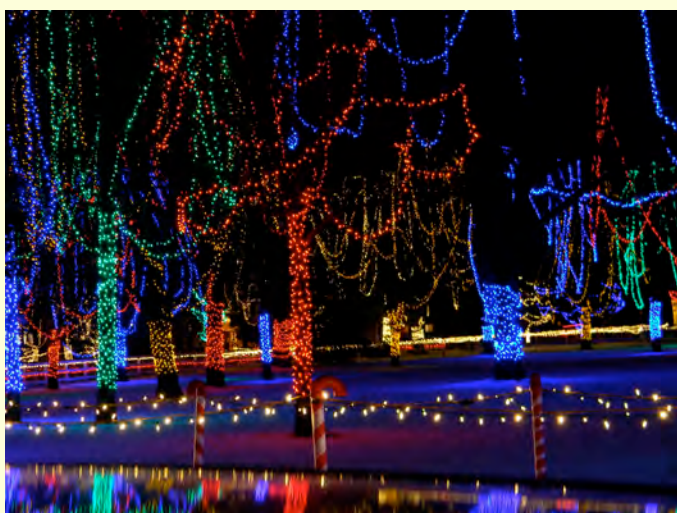
show someone this great hobby we have and would like to share. So fellas, think hard about helping the chapter out this Valentines Day.

So far, we have three quartets signed up. The sign up board will be at rehearsal each week. If you would like, you can call me at (507)-469-4085 for more information or to say "We want to sing!!"

Don't forget to take some of the flyers and pass them out to business, friends, relatives etc.

"It's great to be a barbershopper"

Dwain Frazee



Kiwanis Lights Celebration at Sibley Park this year was awesome. Member Jeff Grimmer volunteered to help represent Twin Rivers, the non-profit sponsor for the night, by working as the exit guard.

Calendar

February 5, 2012 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

February 12, 2012 - Tuesday

Board Meeting - 6:00

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7:00 PM

*February 14, 2012 - Thursday

Valentines Day

More information coming soon

February 19, 2012 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7 PM

February 26, 2012 - Tuesday

Loyola High School Band Room

Regular Practice - 7 PM

April 13, 2013 - Saturday

Annual Show

"Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven"

More information coming soon

May 3-5, 2013 - Tuesday

Contest -

Southwest/10,000 Lakes - Int. Pre-Lims

Hilltop

More information coming soon

Jacob Ritter - Info

660-441-4055

A Nice Note:



Dear Stan and Members Of The Riverblenders,
Thank you for allowing us to use your risers for our Christmas programs and rehearsals. The students are always excited to be able to stand on "those bleacher things" like many of the students call them. Parents are always so happy to be able to see their own children and the risers make that possible. One of the 4th graders gave us a good laugh. The

boy's mother told his teacher that the family wanted to know where he would be standing. Even though he really likes to sing, he wasn't interested in talking about this, but he finally told mom + dad, he was "on the stage." The parents continued to ask questions. They were hoping to figure out where they should try to sit so they would be able to watch the boy and his sister. So mom got him to feel he would be standing on some things like steps. His best answer was, "through." They put me on the top shelf. We truly appreciate being able to perform on the shelves.
Thank you for your support, music and help!
Loyola Catholic High School and Army School

thank you for sharing
your time and
talent

Mary Diercks
Loyola Catholic Schools

Nice To Know

I know it's January but it is time to start planning for who is going to the Spring contest in Roseville on May 3-5th at Northwestern College. Registration is \$ 45 (for all events) and I will be approaching the Board in February as to whether the costs may be off-set with Riverblender money.

It should be a great time since there are International pre-lims and the GNU concert on Saturday eve at 7:30 with special guest quartet- "Throw Back". It is reserved seating so it would be

Mark your calendars, if you haven't already. Division contest will be held in Roseville, I believe, on May 4. It will be a joint contest with the 10,000 Lakes division, as we have done before. Since it is not until May, it is also the LO'L District Prelims, that will determine which quartets will qualify to sing on the International Stage this summer in Toronto. There will also be a special performance by the GNU and a top 10 quartet

Thanks to all those that participated in anyway in this years Leadership academy. The feed back from the members has been extremely positive. At mid-winter I had requests for our curriculum, name of our instructors and any videos. The word is out that this was one of the finest in the society. Our Leadership Academy just keeps getting better. A special thanks to Judd, Tyler, Dave, and Del, who put it all together.

The Mid-Winter Convention was also spectacular. The District Presidents met late on Wednesday, and all day Thursday and Thursday night. We ask for an hour meeting with the society board, which was granted. The meeting also included our new CEO Marty Monson. The hour turned into a 3 hours discussion period. Thanks to the board for allowing this time to interact with each other and for the new District Presidents to get acquainted with each other and with our society board. Also at the society board meeting Marty made a great presentation for gaining and retaining members. The presentation was recorded and will be made available for distribution to Chapters. The District Presidents spent most of the time discussing ways to make our contests "conventions" that will be more enjoyable for members and guests. Make sure you plan to stay for the evening show at our spring convention.

nice to get this in sooner rather than later. Looks like rooms are \$75 at Days Inn and \$112 at the Country Inn (headquarters hotel) so talk to your spouse, get this on your calendar, and be ready to sign up in the upcoming weeks at rehearsal. I will be happy to coordinate room and ride sharing as needed. Or you can call the hotel direct (numbers and info are in the Nov-Dec Pitch Piper on page 14.

Stan Bruss



"Throwback". It promises to be a great weekend with quartets singing Friday, and Saturday, choruses on Saturday as well as our division-winning performance on Saturday. We need you all there. "Book it, Dano!"

BTW, we'll be singing 'Where the Southern Roses Grow' and 'Night Time in Dixie Land'.

Doug Peterson



Your registration to the contest allows free general admission to a great show that is being planned by GNU. Don't miss the spring convention or the evening show.

Our two LOL senior quartets finished in the top 10, I had both in the top five on my score sheet, for some reason the judges didn't agree. Both quartets were great. Something over 450

young men competed in the YIH contest. The top choruses scored above and 80 average score while being scored by the same judges that score our division



Chuck & Audrey in Orlando

and district contests. You could not walk anywhere in that huge convention center without hearing and seeing the young men singing tags. The weather was clear, temperature ranged from a high of 78 to 82, so early morning and evening walks were enjoyed by many. Be sure to give Jon Buss all the help, support and encouragement you can, we need LOL to have some young men on stage at next years Mid-Winter.

Chuck Schubbe - LO'L President