



The Mt. Anthems Newsletter

June 2008

June 5, 2008

Saint John's Lutheran Church

Although Thursday evening is usually our evening for practice, we gave a program instead. The church is located on the other side of Oakland, about 1 hour and 15 minutes from home. The evening was pleasantly warm. Some people thought it was too warm, but I like 80° weather. They did have fans running while we were singing.

We started the service with "He's the One," and "The Lord is My Light." Marty shared some thoughts about the vastness of space and then sang "How Big is God!" Mike sang, "I'm Not Ashamed," and Menno did one of his solos, "After All." The men sang "Wonderful Story of Love" since there was a good-sized group to-night. I think there were only three people missing this evening. I wish we could have that kind of attendance all the time!

After the service we had a light snack. There was loads of food! I tried something new—Chocolate-flavored fruit dip. It was the best fruit dip I've ever tasted! ☺ Of course, that might have something to do with the fact that I'm a chocoholic.

Even after taking time out for a snack, we still got home around 11:30 p.m. Now we need to rest up for Sunday. I've heard it's supposed to be very hot – in the 90's. Guess we'll wait and see.

June 8, 2008

Mount Grove Church of the Brethren

We left at 6:45 a.m. today, headed for Virginia. We've been told it's supposed to be very hot today. Maybe we'll be blessed with air-conditioned churches. We had some guests along today to fill up the empty seats on the bus. The Willis Sommers family and the Junior Beachy family traveled with us.

Menno and Grace did not come along this weekend, because her sister, Alice, was hospitalized yesterday. The Dave Tice family stopped in for this morning's service. They were on their way to Maryland to stay with his father. It was good to see them again.

We had a good service this morning. This congregation always welcomes us with open arms and seems to enjoy the service very much. We started the service by singing "Tis Marvelous and Wonderful." We had three requests for this morning: "Jesus Loves Me," "Don't Give Up," and "Remind Me, Dear Lord."

We went to a campground for a picnic lunch. We've done this several times with this church, and they always have an abundant amount of food.

Now we have a 2 ½ hour drive to our next appointment. We'll be up in the mountains this evening, and maybe it will be a bit cooler.

Set Free Mennonite Church

We enjoyed the privilege of traveling with the Mt. Anthems today. Being a former member of the chorus, it brought back many good memories for me [Marlene].

The ride to the evening service was indeed a memorable one. There was a mountain to cross with the road winding back and forth and up and down! We arrived at our destination at 4:00 p.m. and were soon served a delicious meal by the Puffenbargers. It was very warm that day, temperature-wise, but we also received a warm reception from the folks there.

The comment was made at the beginning of the service that everything except God is changeable. Imagine the insecurity we would experience if God would change. During the service, birds could be heard singing through the open doors and windows. The mountains surrounding us were beautiful and certainly added to the praise we felt as we listened to the songs.

The service began with some group singing. The chorus sang a variety of songs throughout the evening (something for everyone). There were songs of praise and worship, songs of encouragement, songs to challenge our commitment. The comment was made that God wants us to live 100% all the time. Let's not be half-hearted. That jubilant song, "Gone, the tomb is empty..." was enough to get anyone excited! The closing songs were mostly about heaven.

The chorus felt like they made a lot of mistakes that evening. I noticed a few, but the spirit of the singing and the enthusiasm of the group covered up and out-last-ed the mistakes that were made.

Thanks for allowing us to go along.

By Willis and Marlene Sommers

Our meal this evening included grilled chicken, pulled barbecued pork, salads, etc. There was so much food we had to be careful how much we ate, or we wouldn't be able to sing very well.

We sang to a smaller audience than usual, but they sang the three opening songs with gusto! Marty and Mike both did solos this evening, "He Giveth More Grace" and "I'm Not Ashamed" respectively. We also did the request, "I'm No Kin to the Monkey." For some reason Mike felt inspired to demonstrate a little bit of what we do in practice, so we sang several scales for them. I'm not sure how blessed they were by it, but hopefully God can use that small demonstration for His glory. Melody requested the song "Great and Awesome God." She heard it for the first time this morning and really liked it!

After the service, several people decided to start walking home. Of course, they knew they wouldn't get far, but it was a pleasant evening for a walk (breezy and 92° in the sun). ☺ Arlin stopped to pick them up while the rest of us chanted "keep going." We wanted to see how fast they'd run to catch up! ☺

We arrived back at the building around 1:00 a.m. Despite a few winks of sleep, we're very tired. However, we look back on a day filled with blessings and good fellowship. Thus ends another day in the life and times of the Mt. Anthems.

June 21, 2008

Somerset Christian Fellowship

This evening we met at 5:15 p.m. to head for Somerset, PA. Several of us had been helping at an auction most of the day, and we were very tired. God provided the strength we needed for the service. We were a bit short of personnel with only three alto and four bass. We had plenty of soprano and tenor with eight and nine respectively. The tenors thought it was great! They haven't had so many tenors for a long time.

Menno's weren't with us this evening, so Mike was on his own. Songs for the evening included Marty's solo, "I'm the Lamb," and Mike's song, "I Know a Man Who Can." Since all of the members of the men's quartet were along, they sang two songs: "Would You Truly Long for Heaven" and "A Wonderful Shepherd."

Our audience was quite small tonight. After the service Mike gave them some time to share their testimonies. Several people spoke of how they were blessed and at least two people requested prayer for things they are facing in their lives. They seemed very appreciative. One young lady especially seemed to enjoy us even though she has a mental disability. Her mother occasionally had to hang onto her to keep her in her seat!

We hurried home to rest up for tomorrow. This is sort of an unusual weekend, because we are close to home and can spend Saturday night in our own beds. Usually when we have a Saturday evening program we

are far enough away from home that someone hosts us for the night.

June 22, 2008

Mount Joy Church of the Brethren

"I don't even know how to pack anymore" were the thoughts that ran through my head this morning as I tried to prepare for a simple day chorus trip. I couldn't seem to remember the most basic of items. I used to pack in 5 minutes, but this morning was a rather back and forth, up and down, type of experience.

We were scheduled to leave this morning at 8:30, and because I didn't know I was going to be drafted for a guest article, I was blissfully unaware of the actual departure time. I had already settled in and was making fast tracks trying to catch up with all of my friends on the bus that I hadn't spent time with since leaving for Georgia in August.

Anita and I both decided to sit back this morning and listen. We wanted to know what the current group sounded like. Songs this morning were "Blood Washed Band," "Come to the Water," "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." I was particularly blessed by hearing "I'm not Ashamed." The phrase that poignantly stood out to me this morning was "...and that is why I stand today trying to do His will." That, I believe, sums up what each one of us is trying to do on a daily basis. Every decision we make is our interpretation of what we think God would have us do. I was challenged once again to be surrounded by people who have this as their predominate passion.

The group balance has changed drastically in the few months that I've been gone. I'm used to having bass crawling around everywhere, always dominating the numbers, but this morning there were 5 bass and 9 tenors! I was impressed with the balance and blend that the chorus maintained throughout the morning service. Having a radical switch like that, in such a short time, can take some time to adapt to and iron out, but they've done it in short order.

The chorus sang "Great and Awesome God" this morning. We had been rehearsing this song for quite some time last year, but I had never heard it in concert. It turned out well. The point it was at when I left caused me to question. ☺

There were times that the chorus erupted into smiles, and I found myself wondering what Mike said. ☺ Being gone for awhile and then coming back, makes even the small things like that "warm moments." The camaraderie that the directors have with the chorus, the relationships within the chorus—the pulling together, the pray-

ing together, the crying together, the laughing hysterically together—are all things that create what you see on stage, and I didn't realize until I was back that I had missed being a part of it.

I was blessed and encouraged, not only by the songs, but also by the smooth sound, and observing these singers, my friends, once again lifting their voices in praise to the Creator of music.

By Aimee Beachy

Blough Mennonite Church

Spending a day with an entire busload of people that you have known all of your life, most of which know you as well as you know yourself...does life get any better than that? Although it is always fun to be in the realm of those who know you and like you anyhow, and there's a security in "living with" people who really care about you, will always support you, and hear your heart not just what you say, the reality is that we cannot always live with that surrounding us. But take it from one who knows, it is amazing to come back to, and realize that genuine fellowship truly does exist.

This was my first chorus trip since I moved to Georgia in September of '07, and it was wonderful to be back. I enjoyed the morning service tremendously. It was years since I actually just sat and heard the chorus sing. Over the past years as a member of the Mountain Anthems, I would either be singing, not be along, or be struck by some physical affliction and hidden away in some room wishing for the more simple things in life, like a bed. Rarely did I just sit and listen to the chorus. Doing that today sent my mind into the world of music, ministry, and such, and even though I am technically supposed to report on the "2:00 p.m. and after" part of the day, I will take the opportunity to defy my instructions and include a few of my morning thoughts into my evening assignment.

Like I said, it has been years since I have simply sat back and watched/heard the Mountain Anthems sing. I found it to be very refreshing. I have been privileged with other singing opportunities in the past few years that have definitely stretched me musically in a way that I would never have experienced with the Mountain Anthems, and although I enjoyed, and do enjoy, those experiences, I love to come home to THIS - this ministry, this musical focus, this message.

I have learned that the Mountain Anthems have held onto something that a lot of choirs (thinking specifically of Mennonite choirs) have let go of or

never had, and that is the people, the hearts of the people, and the simplistic yet life-changing message that can be presented through music.

Though I will continue to enjoy other musical opportunities, I am thankful that I have the solid foundation of what music should be in ministry, and I have learned that through the Mountain Anthems ministry—seeing the people, hearing the testimonies, and realizing that what is fundamental in a ministry of this nature is that the songs you sing, and the message that is presented is able to be heard and understood. Too often the message is muddled through the complexity of the music. The perfect sound, the amazing harmonies, and the flawless performances often become predominant and override the most important factor of all, which is, of course, the hearts of the people. I am all for improving oneself, and stretching/growing musically, but I find it to be beneficial only if you keep the foundation of music ministry firmly in place.

THINGS I HAVE MISSED ON CHORUS TRIPS

- ❖ Finding a group of people anywhere, be it slopped over bus seats or lounging on church benches, and inviting myself to join them, and finding myself in the midst of conversations that fluctuate from spiritual, heart issues to ridiculous nonsense all in the matter of minutes.
- ❖ Playing spontaneous games that are challenging, competitive, and stretch one's intellect -- games like Trouble, Uno, Sudoku....
- ❖ Starch Overloads at lunch (I'm talking lasagna as a main course, macaroni and cheese for a side dish, and pasta salad as a vegetable....I should learn to "make good choices.")
- ❖ Laughing until I cry during a concert. We all know things are SO funny when you are not allowed to laugh!
- ❖ "Lean on Me" (Which is my favorite Ladies song that we have ever done - the alto is gorgeous).
- ❖ The Ride Home - This can include anything from sleeping, talking, laughing uncontrollably, playing games, smelling bad, and singing songs that range from queer and quirky to harmonious and moving.

THINGS I HAVE NOT MISSED

- ❖ "Yes I Know" (one of my top picks for Least Favorite Songs).
- ❖ The Heat Waves that roll in on chorus trips.
- ❖ Monday morning hangovers.

So as you can see, the list of things I have missed in the chorus far outweighs the things that I have not missed. I love the Mountain Anthems—quirks, imperfections, flaws, and all. And I say with all of my heart about the people, the bus, and even my over-heated, faithful, back-of-the-bus seat, “It was good to be home!”

P.S. I must mention the tragedy of my day. I had to say goodbye to a very dear friend of mine.

My precious, faithful, still-half-full-of-the-water-I-was-needing, larger-than-necessary water bottle slipped from my careless hand and crashed to the ground, and came as close to shattering as plastic knows how. Who ever said plastic was durable? Donations to replace this \$1.97-straight-from-WalMart wonderment can be sent to....

By Anita Beachy