



# The MVEer Monthly January 2022

## **Keeping the Spark Alive – Bob Fichtner, MVE Chapter President**

Before I look ahead as incoming President of the MVE, I would first like to thank my predecessor **Jim Franklin** for his steady hand guiding the chapter through a most unusual two years. I revisited some of the early emails and messages from 2020 when we thought we would make decisions about rehearsing on a weekly basis and smiled at our collective naivete, as we ended up converting semi-permanently to a virtual rehearsal format after only two weeks.



About 13 years ago, I first heard the Chinese proverb "*May you live in interesting times.*" Somehow, the world has been interesting ever since, but likely not more so than these last two years. Although I was on the Board at the time, I know I wasn't privy to all the conversations and decisions Jim had to navigate through in those early weeks, and then as the pandemic dragged on - and on - and on. Thank you **Jim!** Thank you **Bryan!** Thank you **PTeam** and **Board!**

What I do know is that it has been difficult for many *to keep the spark alive* - the joy that music and singing brings to us and our audiences. That spark was rekindled this past month when, after making the tough decision to stop planning for our regular indoor Christmas concert, we chose to perform outdoors at various locations and venues across the Milwaukee area. We had a great audience at the Oak Creek tree lighting and while the "crowds" at our other caroling performances were smaller, the power of music was clearly written on the faces of those passersby who stopped for a few moments to listen to one or more of our carols.

That spark was evidenced by seeing the joy and eagerness of one of our newest members bursting out of the chorus to press a business card into the hands of one of those passersby. And that spark became a raging inferno in our own hearts as we performed again in public and then shared a meal and a libation or two afterwards.

We have a lot to look forward to in 2022, including delivering Singing Valentines, putting on a spring show, preparing for the International convention and contest in Charlotte in July, returning to the District convention and contest in October, and closing the year out with a Christmas show and maybe some more caroling. Whether we get to do all or any of them is anyone's guess. As my dad used to say, "*God only knows, and he ain't tellin'.*"

For the time being, we will continue making our plans and preparations for these and any other activities, persevering through whatever interesting challenges and adversities come our way, ready to pivot and adjust as needed. For now, I close by wishing all our members, fans, and patrons a very safe, happy, and healthy 2022. We can't wait to see you on the risers, on the screen, in the auditorium, or wherever our paths cross.

- Bob (aka "Sparky")

## **An Interview with New MVE Member Michael Cook**

**MVEer asks:** Mike, you are a great tenor and musician. How did you get involved in barbershop singing?

**Mike replies:** Almost ten years ago, I came across the **Crossroads** performance of *Lucky Old Sun* at the 2009 Internationals on YouTube. I was amazed by the performance and was immediately hooked on the genre. From then on, I wanted to get involved in barbershop, but my voice was not in proper shape to do so. About two years ago I started taking voice lessons to fix all the bad habits I built up in high school and college choirs, so I finally felt ready to start with MVE this fall!



**MVEer asks:** Tell us a bit about your family, please. I've seen your son, Chris, discussing stocks and the market at the *Student Investment Club at UWM* and many met your family at our recent caroling event at The Corners in Brookfield.

**Mike replies:** I am blessed with three wonderful sons and an amazing wife, all of whom are musical, as well. My oldest son, **Chris**, is living at home and studying finance at UWM. My middle son, **EJ**, is a senior at Brookfield Academy looking for colleges at which to study business and vocal performance. Despite only being 5'5" and about 135 pounds and having a tenor dad, EJ is a low bass. My youngest son, **Kieran**, is a freshman at Lake Country Lutheran. He doesn't know what he wants to do in life yet other than helping people. My wife, **Susana**, loves cooking, baking and otherwise taking care of people and making things look pretty.



**MVEer asks:** Clearly a musical family. I see you play guitar and know you play piano. What sorts of musical activities did you do before being part of the MVE?



**Mike replies:** Since college the only music I've done is playing in church bands and accompanying my kids' performances. Here is a picture of a silly dinner entertainment thing in Italy where I got called up from the audience and one you took of me at Cathedral Square on December 11.



**MVEer asks:** Please tell us where you grew up and where you live now.

**Mike replies:** I grew up in central Minnesota and spent all my life there, other than a short period in Florida, until I moved to the Milwaukee area in 2010 for my job.

**MVEer asks:** Where do you work?

**Mike replies:** I work as a consulting actuary (healthcare finance) at Milliman. I have been an actuary since 2000 and was a math teacher for about six years before that.

**MVEer asks:** Have you any wishes for us for the New Year?

**Mike replies:** I started learning Spanish in 2021, so continued progress in 2022 is a big one for me. I am also hoping a trip to Portugal in March with the whole family doesn't get cancelled because of COVID. As big as any wish, though, is to have a wonderful time at my first International Convention next summer!

**MVEer says:** Mike, we're so happy you are singing with us in the Mighty MVE. You make us better.

**Everyone in Harmony MVE Study Committee Established** –  
Bob Fichtner, MVE Chapter President



In 2018, the Barbershop Harmony Society announced the "*Everyone in Harmony*" platform and began admitting non-male singers into the Society as full members. This platform also allowed for the formation of mixed quartets and choral groups, either as newly chartered chapters within the society or as a second choral group

within a chapter.

At our November Board of Directors meeting, individuals approached the Board announcing their intent to explore forming a mixed gender chorus in Southeast Wisconsin. They outlined three options for this group including establishing it as a second chorus within the Greendale chapter, taking over an existing but unused chapter in the area, or applying for a new chapter charter with the Society. The individuals stated a preference for having this new chorus within the Greendale chapter and formally asked the Board to consider their request.

As President, I have decided to establish a committee to explore this topic and report their findings back to the Board. **Tom Rogina** has agreed to chair this committee, which will also include **Mike Lietke, Jim Ansay, Bryan Ziegler, Derek Balke**, and myself as an *ex officio* (i.e., non-voting) member.



**Perhaps Carol and Mike Lietke ponder these questions at Grimaldi's Pizzeria while Scott Ganswindt & Bob Fichtner thinks about this with a few cool ones.**

I have charged this committee to answer two primary questions: 1) should the Greendale chapter establish a second chorus within its charter or support the development of a mixed gender chorus as a separate chapter of the Society; and 2) if the recommendation is to establish it within the Greendale chapter, recommend how we need to adjust governance of the chapter to accommodate a second chorus, administration of a second chorus, and financial considerations for the second chorus, plus anything else the Board should consider.

I announced the formation of this committee to the Board at our December meeting and with this email I am informing the broader MVE chorus membership and interested parties.

Should you have any questions, input, or comments for the committee's consideration, please reach out to any of the members named above.

Bob Fichtner, President, Midwest Vocal Express

## MVE Goes All Out Caroling, Here, There, and Everywhere – Dick Marcus

When it was clear that at inside Christmas Show was not in the cards, **Nick Beaudin** (VP of Marketing) went into overdrive to find five prominent venues at which we come go caroling and market us for other singers and for future shows.

On Saturday morning, December 11 in the snow, the chorus met at the *Park and Ride* at Goerke's Corner's in Brookfield to be cold, but to **"warm up."**



We did some ride-sharing to go first to the Deer District downtown. The cold had people scurrying, but we had fans watch us in our "warm up" act at the fiserv forum with our advertising sign prominent wherever we went.





The caroling moved to **Cathedral Square**, where Santa was meeting with kids. The audience and the weather was getting warmer.

Enjoy Christmas songs and holiday cheer from the **MIDWEST VOCAL EXPRESS** Outside - Four times and locations for your convenience – Saturday, December 11, 2021



**1. Deer District Farmer's Market @ 11AM** on Saturday December 11. This year the Deer District is transformed into the **Cheer District** with 31 lit trees as well as a 25-foot Buck's-themed tree.

**2. Then the MVE goes up Kilbourne Ave. to Cathedral Square Park @ 12:15pm** to sing Christmas Carols.



**3. Then the MVE goes to Bayshore Towne Center Mall @ 1:30pm.**



**4. The MVE goes west out to The Corners in Brookfield at 3pm** outside Von Maur.





The car caravan moved north to **Bayshore Towne Center** for caroling in their main square.

And we finished our caroling at **The Corners** of Brookfield with our best audience of the day.



Then our chorus and our family and friends moved over to Grimaldi's Pizza next door at The Corners for our first of two afterglows. Fun and fellowship is evident on the faces of the celebrators.





## **Candy Cane Lane on Monday, December 13, 2021 & Afterglow**

Instead of going to the VA, which we typically do at this time, they did not want us to come due to COVID concerns. Instead, we helped the MACC Fund by caroling in Candy Cane Lane. We warmed up at Walgreens in West Allis. A one-minute video clip of us singing is featured on the **Candy Cane Lane** Facebook Page, just click it:

<https://www.facebook.com/337602383043637/posts/234144299592889/>





Our afterglow was indeed Food & Fun at Club Paragon Bar and Grill.





So, here is Cheers to 2021 and looking forward to *Sparks Alive* in 2022.

# Happy New Year MVE.



