

NEWS from



Holland Windmill Chorus
The Holland MI Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society



12330 James St Suite C40 / PO Box 1403, Holland, MI 49422

Media Information Contacts:

Jay Bylsma
616.399.5721
jbylsma@jbylsma.com

John Peters
269.857.2967
jppubrel@aol.com

HOLLAND'S DIEKEMA NAMED TO BARBERSHOP HALL OF FAME

JULY 22, 2010 -- Willis A. Diekema, former Holland businessman who helped propel barbershop quartet harmony to nationwide prominence in the 1940s and 50s, has been inducted into the Barbershop Harmony Society Hall Of Fame. The award was received on Diekema's behalf by Holland Windmill Chorus during the Society's recent 2010 International Convention in Philadelphia.

Diekema (1892-1988) capped a 50 year career at Holland's DePree Chemical Company with 33 years as president, interrupted only by service in World War I as an aviator in France, where he won the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross for Extraordinary Heroism with the 91st Aero Squadron of the Army Signal Corps. He was the son of 1895 Holland Mayor Gerrit John Diekema, who had earlier served in the Michigan House of Representatives, and went on to become a U.S. Congressman and U.S. Minister to The Netherlands.

Willis Diekema, familiar to many as Bill, had been an avid and accomplished musician since his years at University of Michigan, 1910-14, where he wrote and directed several comic operas that successfully toured to performances in Detroit and Chicago. When the Barbershop Harmony Society was formed in 1938 -- then known as S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., an acronym for Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America -- Diekema's enthusiasm for this uniquely American musical art form led him to organize about 30 local businessmen into Holland Windmill Chorus as Holland's chapter of the new society, in 1945.

As earlier barbershop singing had been largely "woodshed", or improvised harmony, Diekema was among the first barbershoppers to create written arrangements embodying characteristic chord structures designed for ringing vocalization that enhances its four voices with overtones. He became chairman of the Society's College of Arrangers, and produced more than 200 manuscripts between 1947 and 1980. Among them is "Keep America Singing", which has become the Society's theme song and as such is sung every week to conclude chapter meetings by more than 32,000 singers in over 800 chapters across the country.

Holland Windmill Chorus and its quartets perform barbershop concerts at Christmastime and during Holland's Tulip Time Festival, and entertain at a variety of other public and private events throughout the year. The Chorus is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization with membership open to all men who enjoy singing four-part harmony. Newcomers are welcome at all rehearsals, held every Tuesday from 7:30 to 10pm at "Harmony Hall", suite B80 in the Holland Town Center mall, next to Dutch Village alongside Highway 31 south of James St.

For more information about the Chorus and membership opportunities, contact Art Lane (269)857-2781 or visit the Chapter web site at www.harmonize.com/windmill.

###

PHOTO ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpeg HWC- HallOfFame) -- caption follows:

Caption for attached photo:

Holland Windmill Chorus president Jay Bylsma displays Barbershop Harmony Hall of Fame plaque awarded to Holland's Willis A. Diekema.

