

CHRONICALS OF THE COLLEGE CHOIR
Spring of 1942

by "Cheebe" Vinson

One dark night when Mrs. Silas was having a sweet, peaceful nightmare she conceived the idea of having a College Choir. Thus it was in it's conception and thus it remained throughout its course. Mr. Rolf had requested a group to furnish background music for a Miracle Play and called on Mrs. Silas for aid. They decided to have one half hour of music before the play. This was the problem which faced the group as we gathered for practice about one week before the first performance. We sounded about as good as a Ford car hitting on three cylinders. Our spirits were in the dumps--only Mrs. Silas remained optimistic and enthusiastic. Then Mr. Rolf had his rehearsal for the play. Abraham was offering Isaac to God and was to be stopped by an angel. All went well until at the crucial moment of the play Mike Miller made his debut as the angel. Then pandemonium broke loose. Even Mr. Rolf had to remove his cigarette and put his head down and laugh. Poor Mike exclaimed, "Mr. Rolf, you know I don't look like an angel!" Mr. Rolf heartily agreed but was determined to do as well as he could with the material he had. The practice was resumed. Mike was behind a plant and poor Isaac could have been killed a dozen times before the angel came to the rescue.

With much fear and trembling the choir got ready for it's maiden voyage. We lived through it and so did the congregation and we felt pretty good. Then the play began. A strange odor assailed our noses--it nearly suffocated us--it was the incense for the play. Once more we were entertained by celestial antic as Mike got into his costume. Jacob was wrestling with the angel,

but the struggle was tame in comparison with Mike's and the angels wings. As the benediction was pronounced, we all gave a thankful prayer and then went over to Mr. Jackson's for refreshments.

Once more we began intense practice. We had been asked by the Episcopal Church. We were a little more sure but still trembly. Then we rehearsed with the organ and once more found that it did not agree with us on pitch. We were doomed to be an A Cappella choir. Before our performance the ladies of the Episcopal Church gave us a delightful supper, but we were all too worried about our music to enjoy food.

At the next practice Mrs. Silas told us that a good music critic had been favorably impressed by our performance. Our heads began to swell and we felt like we were pretty good.

Two weeks later, the Choir made it's third appearance at the First Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Silas wanted us to sing without any books but we hung on to them as tenaciously as a drowning man to the last straw. In the course of the play, Abe (Jack Lancaster) bashed poor bound Isaac (Wallace Moore) on the head so hard that the angel (Mike Miller) who was dressing in the back alley, thought he was already too late. Jack said he was at a loss as to what to do--whether to rub Wallace's head for him, or just to let the matter ride. Wallace couldn't rub his own head as his hands were tied--literally.

Mrs. Silas suggested that it was about time we organize and elect officers;

President:	Charles Boyd
Vice-President:	Terry Anne (Cheebe) Vinson
Secretary-Treasurer:	Anne Boyd Cleveland
Business Manager:	Mike Miller
Librarian:	Adele Alexander

Our first out-of-town performance was at Denison. We rode on a bus. Everyone was so excited and nervous that we sang all the way up, and we were so relieved afterwards that we sang all the way back. After our performance the group was invited to a dance given at the church. The offer was gracefully declined as the group "had to hurry home". (We were not allowed to dance even in a church). The first thing we wanted to know when Abie (Anne Boyd Cleveland boarded the bus was how much did we get. Of course, we weren't mercenary but only interested.

By this time Charlie Boyd had worked out the plans for a platform and had gotten it constructed. Our first use of it was at the High "Y" at the High School auditorium. Perrvin Field had put on a crazy skit before us and there was another comic act after us. The "Hi-Y-ians" were in high spirits when we appeared for our part of the program which was hymns. But when we got started they quieted down and listened. We had to let our hats out another notch to allow for the expansion.

Then we were asked to sing over the radio. What a thrill! But there was one fly in the ointment. The program was at 6:30 o'clock on Easter morning. It was a bunch of mighty sleepy youngsters who gathered in the early morning light of that Easter day to sing praise to the Lord of Life. After our program, a larger part of the choir went with Mrs. Silas and Mr. Rolf to the Episcopal communion service. It was a beautiful and impressive service. After the service we returned to Mrs. Silas'. We closed the Easter Day by repeating our radio program for the First Presbyterian Church.

It was then we made our first big trip. We were asked to sing for the ladies Presbyterial meeting at the Oak Cliff Presby-

terian Church in Dallas. There was a lot of discussion whether to take cars or go by bus. Finally, we decided on cars and Mike tore out his hair finding enough cars to hold all the people. Dr. Landolt was furnishing gas and oil. We did get enough and left Thursday afternoon in Dean Moorman's car, Betty Phinney's, Mrs. Silas', and Garland Lang's. Mrs. Silas took the lead and held it without any trouble. We were late starting but made up for lost time, trying to keep up with Mrs. Silas. All went well until we reached the city limits of Dallas. Then the clutch broke on Dean Moorman's car that Charlie Boyd was driving. The rest of our crowd was in the lead and knew nothing of the trouble, only we missed Charlie. At one stop light someone would pop his head out the window to tell Mrs. Silas to show down all to no avail. Finally at the end of Ross Avenue we did stop. No Charlie. Mrs. Silas was about to turn around, but about ten minutes later here came Charlie shouting, "I can't stop so let's go!" He had driven and continued to drive that car all through Dallas traffic with no clutch. Why he didn't get picked up for running red lights and stop signs, or why we didn't have to pick the pieces out of a pile of junk, we'll never know.

Nevertheless, we all arrived safely. We sang without books and suddenly realized that we were truly an A Cappella choir. After our program, Charlie took a piece of bailing wire and a pair of pliers and fixed the car and we headed for home. Mrs. Silas brought up the rear so she could pick up the pieces on the way back. Her car stopped in McKinney to look over the lay of the land there as we were to appear there on Sunday. Just outside of the city limits we found Betty Phinney's car-load standing by the side of the road--a busted connecting rod. So Mrs. Silas got behind and pushed her into Sherman. Mike drove for Betty. All in

all, it was a grand job on the part of both drivers. Then after all that strain Mrs. Silas still asked those in her car and Betty to have supper because we had missed out at Lockett Hall. The boys got out at Betty's house and said they would come out on the bus but wouldn't come for supper. The girls went with Mrs. Silas and fixed supper for themselves. Just as they were cleaning up the last remains, three hungry boys arrived. They thought they could get something to eat, but they were disappointed. Mrs. Silas took pity on them and fed them.

On the following Sunday, the choir went to McKinney undaunted. We took cars once more going in Mrs. Silas', the Elliott's, the Kinney's, and Dr. Tucker's. No mishaps. After the service there we were all invited to the home of Mr. Crieg, a member of A.C. Board of Trustees. Our eyes bugged out. We had never seen a more beautiful home. We were all thrilled by the beautiful oil paintings, and the Dresden china, and the pine cones as big as some of our Texas trees, and all the other interesting and beautiful things that filled the home. Mr. Crieg pointed out a cozy corner where he had courted Mrs. Crieg. Needless to say it was occupied for the rest of the time. The only thing I can't figure out is why some of them missed seeing^{it} in the first place and had to be shown. After grand refreshments we headed for Sherman.

Not having had enough in the previous few days we went down to a meeting of Presbytery also in Dallas. The quartet entertained us at supper with a few Negro spirituals, followed by the group standing and singing the school song. The choir rendered a few numbers at the Communion service.

The next day, Dixon Greer complained of discomfiture in a

certain region of his anatomy generally known as the bread-basket. He decided he could negotiate with clearer sailing if he disposed of some of his cargo, so he had his appendix removed. In a few weeks he was back making his usual 10 knots an hour.

Our biggest and most exciting trip was a two-day Dallas trip--at least it was supposed to be two days--it was three days before we got back--but, as the fellow said to the absentminded elevator boy, I'm getting ahead of my story. We left Sherman about noon on Saturday. I thought we were going on Greyhound, but the bus the girls were on was more like a Dachshund. (They had two buses, the girls went in one and the boys in the other.) At Celina, we got another bus. The seats were so close together, the long-legged boys had to drape their legs in the aisle or double them up under their chins. What a gay, hysterical ride that was! We had some driver! He talked a blue streak--part of it was funny and some of it ceased to be. He only used his half of the road, but his half was anywhere he happened to meander. We would miss a car by inches and he would only snap his fingers. "Shucks", he said, "I can drive a bus and an ordinary man can't run an intertube." He also went into all the science of driving a bus. Nevertheless, we arrived in Dallas safely. We got there a little late and there was a hurried scramble and a last-minute practice. The Choir appeared first on Jack Lancaster's devotional service. After this service, there was more practice and supper. During supper, the girls sang "The Rose of Tralee" and the Quartet rendered "E-E-Ezekiel Saw the Wheel". That was followed by a quick change to mustaches and coiffures and the Quartet became a Barber Shop Quartet and sang a medley of tunes. At the evening service the Quartet (they looked

human again) sang some spirituals in connection with Lewis Waterstreet's devotional. After the evening service we were directed to our different domiciles.

When we gathered together the next morning to leave for Lancaster, each tried to out-do the other in praises of the home he had stayed in. There was a group so deeply embedded in luxury they almost missed the bus. As we drove out of Dallas Mac Boyd was in seventh heaven. The flowers were so beautiful that he swiped a few for himself. I really believe if we had stayed in Dallas longer the Park Presbyterian Church would have been without roses. At Lancaster, we sang at Sunday School and then put on our program for the church service. Doug Charles and Joe Palachek put in a plug for A.C. and all like institutions. We then went to "The Cottages" for lunch. We all enjoyed ourselves to the fullest in more ways than one. We headed for Dallas again. All the time we were on this trip, it rained cats and dogs and there were "puddles" on the road.

When we reached the First Presbyterian Church in Dallas, Jack Smith found a nice comfortable bench and stretched out. His slumber was soon disturbed, however, when Adel (Alexander) pulled the wrong stop on the big three manual organ. It didn't take her long to get it under control and was soon playing it like she had been used to one like it all her life. As usual, the choir had difficulty in finding where to stand but they were finding remedies by the use of one section of our platform, chairs, and a few boxes. Then we went to supper. A number of our group gave our comments on the values for a Christian College on the Young People's program. The time drew near for our performance. We were really

keyed up and in my opinion, put on our best yet. We had real chimes with our vesper hymn, too.

After the play we went to our bus. All of us were worn to a frazzle--worn to a fraz-zle--and were mightly glad to climb aboard. The driver announced that a flood was sweeping down from swollen rivers and had washed out the bridge on one road. Ten miles out we were stopped because the water was across the road. There ensued a lot of discussion as to what to do. The driver wanted to wait until the water had run down. Mr. Rolf wanted to get on higher ground as soon as possible. Mrs. Silas wanted to find Bob who had left Dallas a few minutes before we did. And the rest of the folks didn't care what happened as long as they got something to eat and found a nice soft shoulder to lie on. We finally turned back in search of a telephone and found one and also found Bob (Silas or Bidwell). We called Sherman to inform them of our whereabouts. After some discussion, in which the driver made himself heard a good deal, we headed back to Dallas. Jack Lancaster had called his home and when we arrived his aunts were ready to take 13 girls (including Mrs. Silas). The men scattered out to the homes of the different A.C. boys who lived in Dallas. Mr. Rolf said he would be glad to sleep anywhere as long as the bus driver didn't sleep with him. Thus the group spent the night on mats, and 3 or 4 in "bed". The next morning, Jack's aunts gave the girls a wonderful breakfast. When some of us remarked on the amount of food when the choir unexpectedly arrived, Mrs. Stephman explained that they knew Jack and a few friends were coming and had stored in food for them. Her estimate of their appetite had caused her to provide enough to feed

13 girls. While we were waiting for the bus, Jack demonstrated a dog who could do every trick known to dogs even sing high or low as directed. When the bus finally arrived, the girls, not being so dumb, scattered out leaving places vacant next to them. Poor Jack sought refuge by Mrs. Silas. We gathered up the boys and once more wended our weary way. We were stopped again as all but southbound^{roads} were closed. However, after some discussion we decided to try our luck on the road to Denton. The driver summarized that the bus would serve as a boat. We passed through some terribly flooded areas and went through water up to the hubcaps on the bus. After much wandering, we arrived safely in Denton. Being hungry, as usual, we stopped for lunch much to the disgust of the driver, who was in a hurry. We resumed our trip and without further mishap arrived in Sherman still able to sing the school song. When we were almost home Bill Baine told Wallace Moore he would get back in time to go to school. Wallace retorted, "Just listen to the silly old boy". The return took 6 hours, so ended our most eventful trip.

Our next trip was to Bonham and Paris. We left about three in the afternoon and put on our program in Bonham at five. It was as hot as blue blazes but we couldn't use the fan as it would have decapitated Charlie, whose head, instead of being in the clouds, was in the fan. Behind stage we made a mess of our first song. Everyone started on a different pitch, but Mrs. Silas finally got us back on. No one brought books so Cheebe put the words to the communion hymn on the board just one jump ahead of the singing.

Fifteen minutes after~~wards~~ we finished our program, we had loaded up and were ready to go again. We were to appear in Paris

at 8. The ladies there serviced us a grand supper finishing up with strawberry shortcake. During supper some of our group had the privilege of meeting Dr. and Mrs. Tensly Smith who were on the Zanzan when it was torpedoed and spent 33 terrible days on a German prison ship--the Dresden.

We got through our program alright this time, but we nearly broke loose backstage when a strawberry shortcake walked by with Charlie Boyd. After the program, the whole group went out to Mary Jim Gee's, an alumna, for refreshments.

We sang nearly all the way home and arrived on campus about midnight. Thus ended our last out-of-town trip.

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