

Love of music motivates this area barbershopper

By BRUCE STAPLEY
The house lights dim, the curtain rises, and you are suddenly sitting there in total awe as 125 men combine perfectly to produce a four-part acapella close harmony equal to anything you have ever experienced musically.

Positioned two rows up on the risers, Stouffville's Jim Rehill stands, delivering his vocal contribution to this group which has distinguished itself internationally ever since they first got together in 1952.

For three years, Rehill, who has made his own musical mark as a choir director in Stouffville, has been realizing a dream. He is a member of the Dukes of Harmony, a group of men determined to preserve and encourage the art of Barbershopping everywhere.

Part of an international society, the Dukes have performed at such places as Roy Thomson Hall and the Canadian National Exhibition. Twice they have won international championships recognizing them as the world's best barbershoppers.

Their costumes are a showy green, which, along with their prominent gold bowler hats, create an authentic 1920s ambience. All perform as one, the perfect blend of harmony and impressive physical expression.

And the overall effect is nothing short of spellbinding. Rehill claims he was hooked from the start when he first saw the Dukes perform at the CNE in 1980. "I'd never heard anything like it - it was incredible."

Rehill is quick to acknowledge that most people tend to see barbershopping as a lower level form of music symbolized by "four drunks leaning up against a lamp post." But nothing could be further from the truth, he insists.

"You learn so much about music when you are involved in barbershopping," adds Rehill emphasizing the Dukes' penchant for perfection. "They take a highly professional approach."



JIM REHILL
Keeps on singing

Rehill was convinced to join the Dukes by Don Attridge, of Markham, with whom Rehill had sung in the same high school.

"I figured if Don was with them, maybe I could give it a try," he said. "Don told me about how the Dukes had been to places like Seville and St. Louis competing. Then I heard them again at Roy Thomson Hall, and I said, 'I don't believe these guys'."

Rehill accompanied Attridge to a practice, and he's been going ever since. The Dukes have won the Ontario Championships every time they've entered, won the international barbershopping competition in 1977 and 1980, and placed third in San Antonio in the internationals last July. They will compete for the world title again this July in Kansas City.

And Rehill says he just can't get enough. "I've been with the Dukes for three years now, and this will be my third straight international competition. Some people have been barbershopping 35 years and never competed internationally."

Rehill has certainly paid his dues when it comes to having earned the right to sing with such a renowned group of choirists.

He sang in the church choir in his native Midland from the age

of six, and was with the Midland High School choir in Ontario in 1963.

He sang in the McMaster University Choir, as well as in the university's Gilbert and Sullivan productions. Upon moving to Stouffville, he was prominent in the Music Mania choir, then took over the leadership of the Stouffville District Secondary School Choir in 1967.

Rehill directs the Christ Church Anglican choir, a two night a week commitment, which when combined with his Dukes involvement, sees him with little spare time.

A teacher at SDSS, Rehill sees the Dukes as being a long term commitment. "I can see the Dukes as forming a marvellous part of my retirement."

While the Dukes fulfill all his musical needs, Rehill says there is a lot more to the group than singing. "It's a family. Barbershoppers recognize each other world wide. It's a great fraternity. It becomes your life."

"At first, all I thought about was the music and the travel. But the friendships you gain are an important part as well."

The commitment to excellence is paramount, Rehill claims. "We work very hard, and we have outstanding leadership. It's an outstanding organization."

Jim points to the other area residents who help comprise the group that sees some members come from as far away as Barrie. There's Attridge, John Odom of Gormley, Rick Heath, George Pratt and Rob Swann of the Stouffville-Uxbridge area.

Jim Rehill feels there couldn't be a better slogan for the Dukes of Harmony than the credo they adopted years ago - "Keep the whole world singing."

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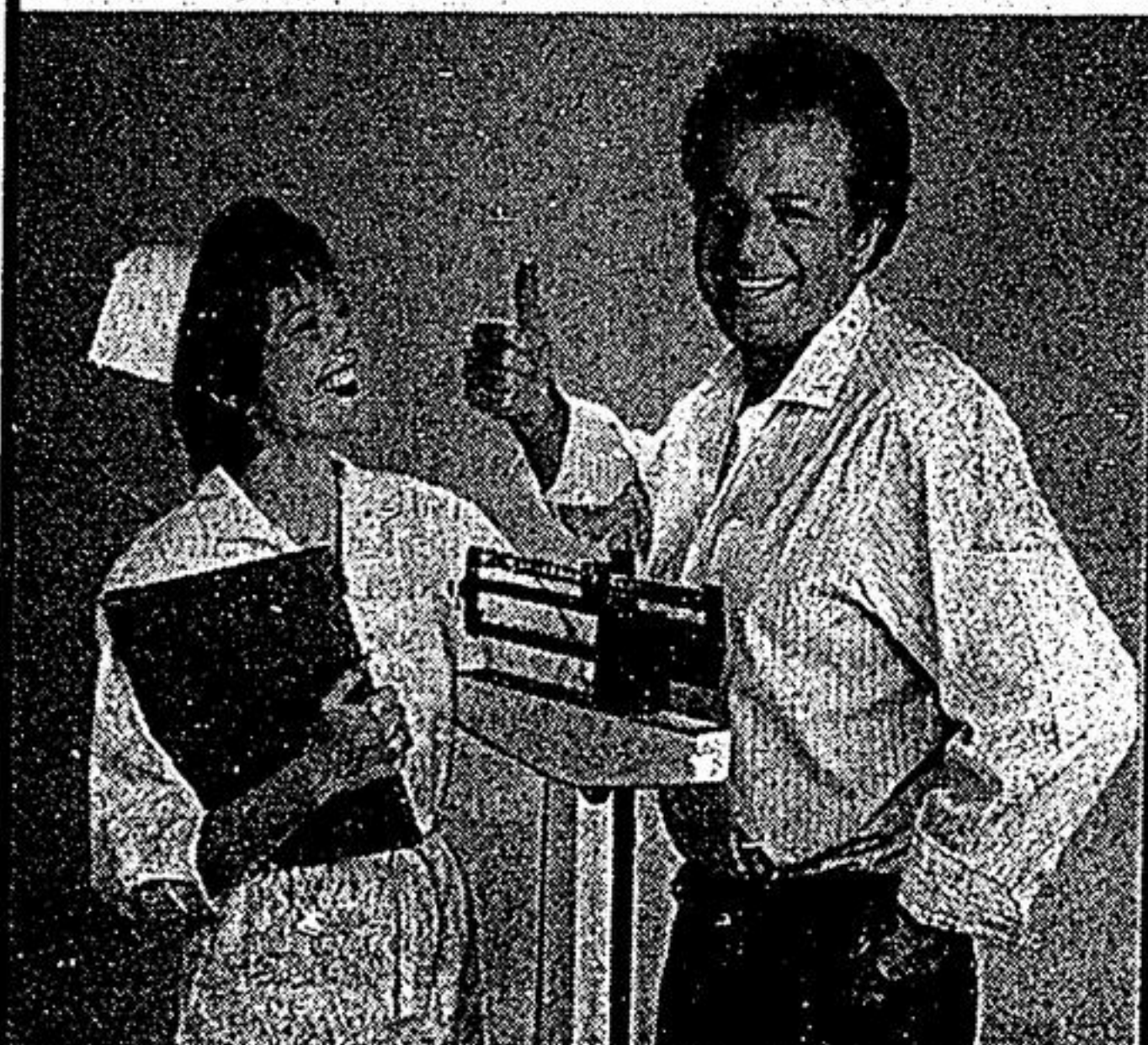
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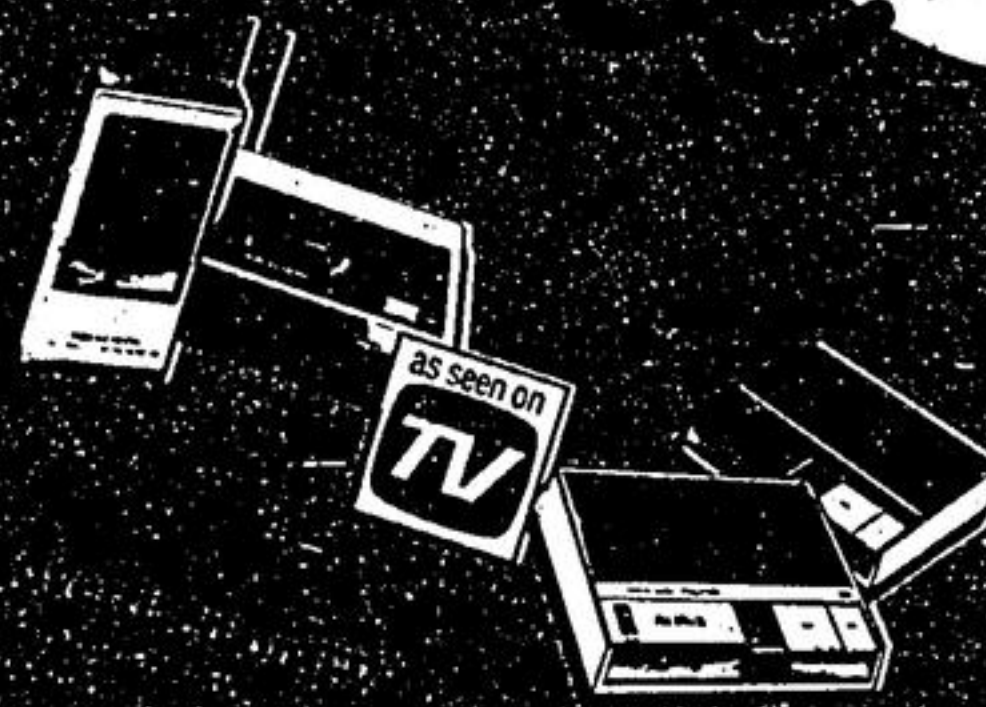
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