

GM children's chorus in spotlight

Local youths were proud to be included in Inland's critically acclaimed group.

By Adele Koehnen
Contributing Writer

From 1936-70, Inland Division of General Motors in Dayton sponsored a Children's Chorus for the children of its employees.

Soon, other children from ages of 8 to 18 were invited to audition for the 100-member chorus. Ideally, the ratio was 50 girls and 50 boys. The girls wore long blue dresses, and the boys looked professional in dark jackets and white shirts. Each singer held the music in a large black folder.

The chorus became well known through its popular and critically acclaimed concerts, national radio broadcasts and performances on early television. The chorus frequently performed with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, and at one time as part of the world premiere stage production of Benjamin Britten's "Saint Nicolas" with guest conductor Hugh Ross of New York and tenor David Lloyd of the New York City Opera.

The first director, Richard Westbrook, died at the age of 44. Joseph Geiger, a local church organist and choirmaster, replaced him. The chorus was accompanied by pianist Mary McCash and organist Urban Deger.

Children joined the chorus as second-graders and aged out at 16 or 18. Every member of some families participated in the chorus.

Thomas Connair of Kettering, a retired veterinarian, remembers that he and his five brothers and their



Former members of the Inland Children's Chorus (first row, from left): Phyllis Denlinger Phillips, Virginia Mauch Wade, Joe Wade, Shirley Whiting; (second row, from left) Paul Thomas, Gene Schamel, Jim Thomas, Helen Albers Crotty, Jerry Alred, Tom Connair, Fred Moore, Bob Drerup attended a reunion. Contributed photos

sister all sang with the Inland Children's Chorus. "We must have inherited good singing voices, but it was always a great day for Mom and Dad when still another offspring passed the audition," Connair said.

June Albers Lavin of Centerville and her sister Helen Albers Crotty of Miami Twp. were members from the beginning in 1936 until they left high school. "It was a great experience and it's fun to look back on those days. I always remember the long blue dresses," said Crotty.

In 2007, Gerald Alred, a chorus member (1951-59) and now professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee connected with former chorus members through a music blog. On a business trip to Dayton this past June, Alred organized a lunch with former chorus members to decide what to do with the extensive memorabilia he and others had accumulated.

The former members who attended included



The Inland Children's Chorus. Gerald Alred (front row, first on left) organized a reunion of former members.

Fred Moore, a longtime member of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra; and Paul Thomas, a 35-year member of the Kim Kelly Orchestra, among others.

Alred conducted research and received support for the project from Jane Brock Woodall and Craig Orr at the Smithsonian Institution as well as Christo Datini, archivist at the General Motors Heritage Center. Datini believed the project would document this portion of GM's history.

All this led to enthusiastic interest from special collections and archives

at Wright State University Libraries in Dayton. Alred and others presented digital versions of photographs, recordings and other materials to the archives at WSU on May 21.

"Now that the initial materials are in place, we urge others to contribute their personal Inland Children's Chorus memorabilia," Alred said.

Toni VandenBos, one of the archivists at WSU Special Collections, may be reached at (937) 775-3991.

Contact this writer at (937) 433-1552 or adeleauk4737@sbcglobe.com.



Subscribe now

edition

Customer Service

Register Now | Sign In | E-mail preferences

Dayton Daily News

Dayton, OH
 H: 86° L: 61°
 Forecast | Set Location
85°
 Feels Like: 86°

- Home
- Local News
- Sports
- Business
- Entertainment
- Life
- Opinion
- Photos & Video
- Help
- Jobs
- Cars
- Homes
- Classifieds & Deals
- Local Directory

[News feeds](#)
[E-mail alerts](#)
[Mobile](#)
[Text alerts](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Facebook](#)

 site
 web

[Web search by YAHOO!](#)

- Classifieds
- Autos
- Real Estate
- Jobs

HOT ONLINE DEAL

\$5 OFF ANY LARGE

DOMINO'S PIZZA

AMERICAN LEGENDS' AT MENU PRICE

ORDER NOW

Home > News > Community > Dayton News

GM children's chorus in spotlight

Hot Topics

- ▶ [Get a free garage sale kit \[pdf\]](#)
- ▶ [Local firefighter to appear on 'Regis and Kelly'](#)
- ▶ [Lowest area gas prices](#)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Former members of the Inland Children's Chorus (first row, from left): Phyllis Denlinger Phillips, Virginia Mauch Wade, Joe Wade, Shirley Whiting; (second row, from left) Paul Thomas, Gene Schamel, Jim Thomas, Helen Albers Crotty, Jerry Alred, Tom Connair, Fred Moore, Bob Drerup attended a reunion.

[ENLARGE PHOTO](#)

Latest local news

- ▶ [Model from Oakwood killed, dismembered by photographer, police say](#) 4:30 p.m.
- ▶ [Lethal force OK'd in all dog shootings by police since 2008](#) 4:10 p.m.
- ▶ [Ohio Senate could strike down pit bull vicious label](#) 4:10 p.m.
- ▶ [Police forced to shoot and kill more vicious dogs](#) 3:48 p.m.
- ▶ [Widmer family keeps hope as jury breaks for holiday weekend](#) 12:12 p.m.
- ▶ [> More headlines](#)

More like this

Automatically generated based on the text of this story.

- ▶ [Rite Aid/Children's Miracle Network Car Show](#) Apr 30
- ▶ [Children's Miracle Network Car Show](#) May 13
- ▶ [Scotties in the spotlight at dog show at expo center](#) Apr 3
- ▶ [Unknown OSU kicker thrust into spotlight](#) Nov 21
- ▶ ['Chorus Line' connects with](#)

By Adele Koehn, Contributing Writer

1:53 PM Friday, May 28, 2010

From 1936-70, Inland Division of General Motors in Dayton sponsored a Children's Chorus for the children of its employees.

Soon, other children from ages of 8 to 18 were invited to audition for the 100-member chorus. Ideally, the ratio was 50 girls and 50 boys. The girls wore long blue dresses, and the boys looked professional in dark jackets and white shirts. Each singer held the music in a large black folder.

The chorus became well known through its popular and critically acclaimed concerts, national radio broadcasts and performances on early television. The chorus frequently performed with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, and at one time as part of the world premiere stage production of Benjamin Britton's "Saint Nicolas" with guest conductor Hugh Ross of New York and tenor David Lloyd of the New York City Opera.

The first director, Richard Westbrook, died at the age of 44. Joseph Geiger, a local church organist and choirmaster, replaced him. The chorus was accompanied by pianist Mary McCash and organist Urban Deger.

Children joined the chorus as second-graders and aged out at 16 or 18. Every member of some families participated in the chorus.

Thomas Connair of Kettering, a retired veterinarian, remembers that he and his five brothers and their sister all sang with the Inland Children's Chorus.

"We must have inherited good singing voices, but it was always a great day for Mom and Dad when still another offspring passed the audition," Connair said.

June Albers Lavin of Centerville and her sister Helen Albers Crotty of Miami Twp. were members from the beginning in 1936 until they left high school. "It was a great experience and it's fun to look back on those days. I always remember the long blue dresses," said Crotty.

In 2007, Gerald Alred, a chorus member (1951-59) and now professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee connected with former chorus members through a music blog. On a business trip to Dayton this past June, Alred organized a

[E-mail this page.](#)

[Print this page](#)

[Larger type](#)

Breaking news by e-mail

Start your day with top headlines in your inbox and get breaking news e-mail alerts at any time by subscribing to our Headlines e-mail newsletter.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

CLICK > LOAD > SAVE

Over \$50 in Savings

Visit Our New Digital Coupon Center >

Most popular in Local News

- HEADLINES
- GALLERIES
- SEARCHED

- [Vic Cassano Jr. dies at 65, remembered for saving pizza chain](#)
- [Kettering superintendent seeks to retire, be rehired by district](#)
- [Final witness says she had sex with chief master sergeant and his wife](#)
- [Bus in I-70 crash carried seniors to graduation practice](#)
- [Local manufacturer may 're-shore' work from Asia](#)

lunch with former chorus members to decide what to do with the extensive memorabilia he and others had accumulated.

The former members who attended included Fred Moore, a longtime member of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra; and Paul Thomas, a 35-year member of the Kim Kelly Orchestra, among others.

Alred conducted research and received support for the project from Jane Brock Woodall and Craig Orr at the Smithsonian Institution as well as Christo Datini, archivist at the General Motors Heritage Center. Datini believed the project would document this portion of GM's history.

All this led to enthusiastic interest from special collections and archives at Wright State University Libraries in Dayton. Alred and others presented digital versions of photographs, recordings and other materials to the archives at WSU on May 21.

"Now that the initial materials are in place, we urge others to contribute their personal Inland Children's Chorus memorabilia," Alred said.

Toni VandenBos, one of the archivists at WSU Special Collections, may be reached at (937) 775-3991.

Contact this writer at (937) 433-1552 or adeleauk4737@sbcglobal.net.

Share this article



READER COMMENTS

ADD COMMENT

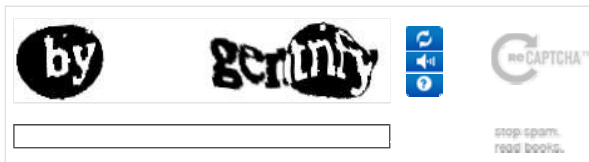
We welcome your comments. Please remember this is a public forum and behave appropriately. Your comments must conform to our visitor's agreement.

Name: [input] E-mail: [input]

Comments: [text area]

500 character limit

Enter the two words shown to post your comment



These words come from scanned books. Entering them helps digitize old texts.

Post comment

MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

TAMARIND SQUARE
VIEW JOB

REGISTERED NURSE - PART-TIME AND PRN

MCCULLOUGH HYDE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
VIEW JOB

CLERKS, HOUSEKEEPING

HOPE HOTEL
VIEW JOB

DRIVERS

BENNETT DRIVEAWAY
VIEW JOB

MANAGER, INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

WINWHOLESALE
VIEW JOB

NEWS PHOTOS & VIDEOS



Scouts decorate graves



Explosion at car show



Veteran appreciation ceremony



MAV Flight Test Lab unveiled

Latest news blog posts

- Cundiff trial: Defendant convicted of eight felonies
Surgeon general to speak at WSU med school commencement
Naked woman sexual assault: suspect indicted on three counts of rape
Speeding Caddy with thousands in cash inside stopped on U.S. 35
Cundiff trial: Jury starts deliberating about two attacks
More news blogs

From our news partners

- Fetus found in high school turns out to be vegetable matter
Man says shove by moose mascot put him in hospital
Woman kills herself while driving on interstate with child in car
Baby dies from injuries after dad dropped her while playing
Road rage incident leads to bizarre neighborhood shooting
NC man crosses English Channel with helium balloons
Boy assaulted with water balloon filled with bleach
Feeding hot dogs to gators lands Fla. man in hot water
Scrap hunters dig up human remains leading to arrest of suspect
Unfinished Orlando estate listed for \$75 million



Fast Food 45409 Zip

Denny's
1136 S Main St
Dayton, OH 45409
4 reviews





Subscribe now



Customer Service

Register Now | Sign In | E-mail preferences

Dayton Daily News

Dayton, OH
 H: 86° L: 61°
 Forecast | Set Location
85°
 Feels Like: 86°

- Home
- Local News
- Sports
- Business
- Entertainment
- Life
- Opinion
- Photos & Video
- Help
- Jobs
- Cars
- Homes
- Classifieds & Deals
- Local Directory

News feeds
 E-mail alerts
 Mobile
 Text alerts
 Twitter
 Facebook
 site web

Web search by YAHOO!

- Classifieds
- Autos
- Real Estate
- Jobs

CLICK > LOAD >

Visit Our New Digital Coupon Center >



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Former members of the Inland Children's Chorus (first row, from left): Phyllis Denlinger Phillips, Virginia Mauch Wade, Joe Wade, Shirley Whiting; (second row, from left) Paul Thomas, Gene Schamel, Jim Thomas, Helen Albers Crotty, Jerry Alred, Tom Connair, Fred Moore, Bob Drerup attended a reunion.

[RETURN TO ARTICLE](#)

Breaking news by e-mail

Start your day with top headlines in your inbox and get breaking news e-mail alerts at any time by subscribing to our Headlines e-mail newsletter.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

IDENTITY THEFT IS ON THE RISE!*

Help protect

everything you

LifeLock
#1 in Identity Theft Protection

Most popular in Local News

-
-
-

- [Vic Cassano Jr. dies at 65, remembered for saving pizza chain](#)
- [Kettering superintendent seeks to retire, be rehired by district](#)
- [Final witness says she had sex with chief master sergeant and his wife](#)
- [Bus in I-70 crash carried seniors to graduation practice](#)
- [Local manufacturer may 're-shore' work from Asia](#)