

January, 2002

## *Time to “sharpen your saw”*

*by Jane Iverson, Wyoming ACDA President*

Post-holiday greetings to all choral directors in the Great Northwest! I'd like to share some thoughts with you on why we do what we do.

Did you know that the Robert Shaw Collegiate Chorale's very first engagement was a broadcast of Christmas music over the NBC network on Dec. 21, 1941? It did not receive much attention because as Joseph Mussulman wrote in his biography of Robert Shaw, “the nation was still in the grip of emotional aftershock from the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.”

Sounds all too familiar, doesn't it? Here is what Robert Shaw subsequently wrote to the members of his chorale:

*I don't feel at all evangelistic about it, but I am pretty convinced that there is a considerable place for a group like yours in a time like this. - And I do not refer to the implementing of political morale.*

*What I have hazily in mind is this: The next few years may prove to be pretty brutal, - And if somewhere during that time there is a group of 200 young people with - let us say - a real devotion to great music and flawless artistry, and with the sensitivity which music such as we sang yesterday demands, a group capable of responding to the less tempestuous virtues, with over all a feeling of friendliness and reasonable human regard - that is pretty important.*

*I'd like to feel that the Collegiate Chorale helped to preserve those attitudes in the days of OUR years.*

*Sincerely, Bob Shaw*

Our work is so very important. If anyone has a doubt, just review how great a role music has played in the aftermath of 9-11. We are engaged in a musical ministry of healing and peacemaking. By allowing people to get in touch with their innermost feelings, we have helped them, and ourselves find our way through the chaos of senseless destruction to begin our own healing processes. But, it's a ministry that can take a toll, as we all know.

Sven was a lumberjack who was hired by a logging company because he was faster, stronger, and more productive than anyone else in the company. His first week on the job, he cut down twice as many trees as anyone else. Management was ecstatic. The next week, his productivity was still very good, but about 15% less than the previous week. The third week, Sven's productivity slipped another 20%. The concerned personnel manager called Sven in for a conference and confronted him with the statistics. He asked Sven for an explanation. Sven replied, "Yah, I know, but, golly, I been so busy, don'tcha know, and I been workin' so hard, that I haven't even had time to sharpen my saw!"

I have a feeling many of us spend more time balancing our choirs than we do balancing our lives. My post-holiday wish for all of us involved in making music is that we beg, borrow, steal, or simply take the time to sharpen our own saws, to put our own lives in balance. We have only one life to live, to give, to raise our families, and educate our young. May our brief time here be all that it can be. May our work bring us happiness, satisfaction, and serenity in a job well done. May we preserve the attitudes of friendliness and human regard in the days of OUR years.

*Sincerely, Jane Iverson*