



Deb Benedett/Winona Daily News

Lewiston-based Sometimes 8 is made up of: (front, from left) Randy Snell, Garlan Hulbert, Dan Harstad, Tom Ties, Fred Gatzlaff; (back, from left) Jim Bromeland, Lucas Helland and Al Carlson. The group will be performing, along with six other acts, on "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor Saturday in "Talent From Towns Under 2,000."

Sometimes 8 hits 'big time'

Lewiston group to appear on Keillor's 'Prairie Home Companion'

By Deb Benedett
Winona Daily News

LEWISTON, Minn. — Like Superman, the group Sometimes 8 often has to make quick changes — but not in phone booths.

In a flash Sunday the Lewiston-based musical octet changed from heavenly praises and church attire to star-spangled patriotism and racing tennis.

The group of eight area men sang gospel in a local church service and then sang the national anthem for the Lewiston Fools' Five road race early Sunday.

Thousands of spectators and racers stood silent as the wind carried the harmonious voices of Sometimes 8.

It was one of the largest audiences the group has performed in front of since its inception a year and a half ago.

The size pales, however, when compared to what the group's audience will be this weekend.

Sometimes 8 has been chosen to perform on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion."

The show has an audience of approximately 2 million listeners.

Six acts from small towns and the rural areas of Minnesota and Wisconsin will be featured in Saturday's broadcast titled, "Talent From Towns Under 2,000."

The six acts were chosen from nearly 200 entries.

The group members, full of modesty, snicker at the idea that they've hit "the big time" and don't appear to be taking their

Sometimes 8

Members: Tom Ties, Randy Snell, Dan Harstad, Al Carlson, Fred Gatzlaff, Jim Bromeland, Lucas Helland and Garlan Hulbert.

Where: "A Prairie Home Companion" will feature the Lewiston-based group Saturday in a special broadcast called, "Talent From Towns Under 2,000."

Why: Garrison Keillor came up with the idea to feature small town talent. By March 1 more than 200 entries had been received and from those six acts were chosen.

How: The show, produced by Minnesota Public Radio and distributed by Public Radio International, has an audience of approximately 2 million listeners and is carried on more than 325 public radio stations nationwide. In this area, the program can be heard on KLSE-FM 91.7 out of Rochester and WHLA-FM 90.3 out of La Crosse from 5-7 p.m. Saturday. The show will be repeated from 6-8 p.m. Sunday on KZSE-FM 90.7 in Rochester.

Others: Other guests on the show will be the Bob Brenny Polka Band from Albany, Minn.; Larry "Coop" Cooper, a harmonica player who lives between Pemberton and St. Clair, Minn.; pianist William Munson, from Howard Lake, Minn.; singer/guitarist Yaka Peinovich, from Arkansas, Wis.; and yodeler Janet Sorenson from the outlying area of Fisher, Minn.

stardom too seriously.

"We're just a group of guys who love to sing," Al Carlson said.

This group of "regular guys" intend to stay that way.

Tom Ties is a mail carrier and a carpenter; Randy Snell is a veterinarian; Dan Harstad is the manager of the Dover-Eyota Kwik Trip; Carlson is the Lewiston-Altura school counselor; Fred Gatzlaff is a dairy equipment dealer; Jim Bromeland is a professor at Winona State University; Lucas Helland is a diesel

mechanic and Garlan Hulbert is an industrial education instructor at L-A High School.

The group is divided two to a part: first and second tenor, baritone and bass. That way, hopefully, all the parts will be covered should absences arise.

"Sometimes we're eight and sometimes we're not," Carlson said.

Their appearances most frequently include monthly visits to the Lewiston Villa nursing home, area basketball games and area churches.

Hulbert called their purpose "to unify a community and Christian beliefs."

"We bring a message. All you have to do is sit and listen," he said.

The group sings a cappella, accompanied by tape and piano and performs mostly hymns and spirituals but also boogies to '50s and '60s music.

Their voices burst forth like trumpets in "Majesty" and their feet start tappin' to "Step into the Water" and "Little Talk with Jesus."

The group also gets requests for "Calendar Girl" by Neil Sedaka; "Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear" by Elvis Presley; and "Unchained Melody" by the Righteous Brothers.

"Barbara Ann" by the Beach Boys is one of the songs they plan to sing Saturday.

Hulbert explains that entering the competition was a last-minute decision.

He and Carlson asked the group on a Wednesday rehearsal night if they would agree to entering the competition.

Thus the group, just barely getting their tape in past deadline, was chosen to represent small town talent.

And though the guys in Sometimes 8 don't leap buildings with a single bound, they vow to bring entertainment and good music, wherever they go.