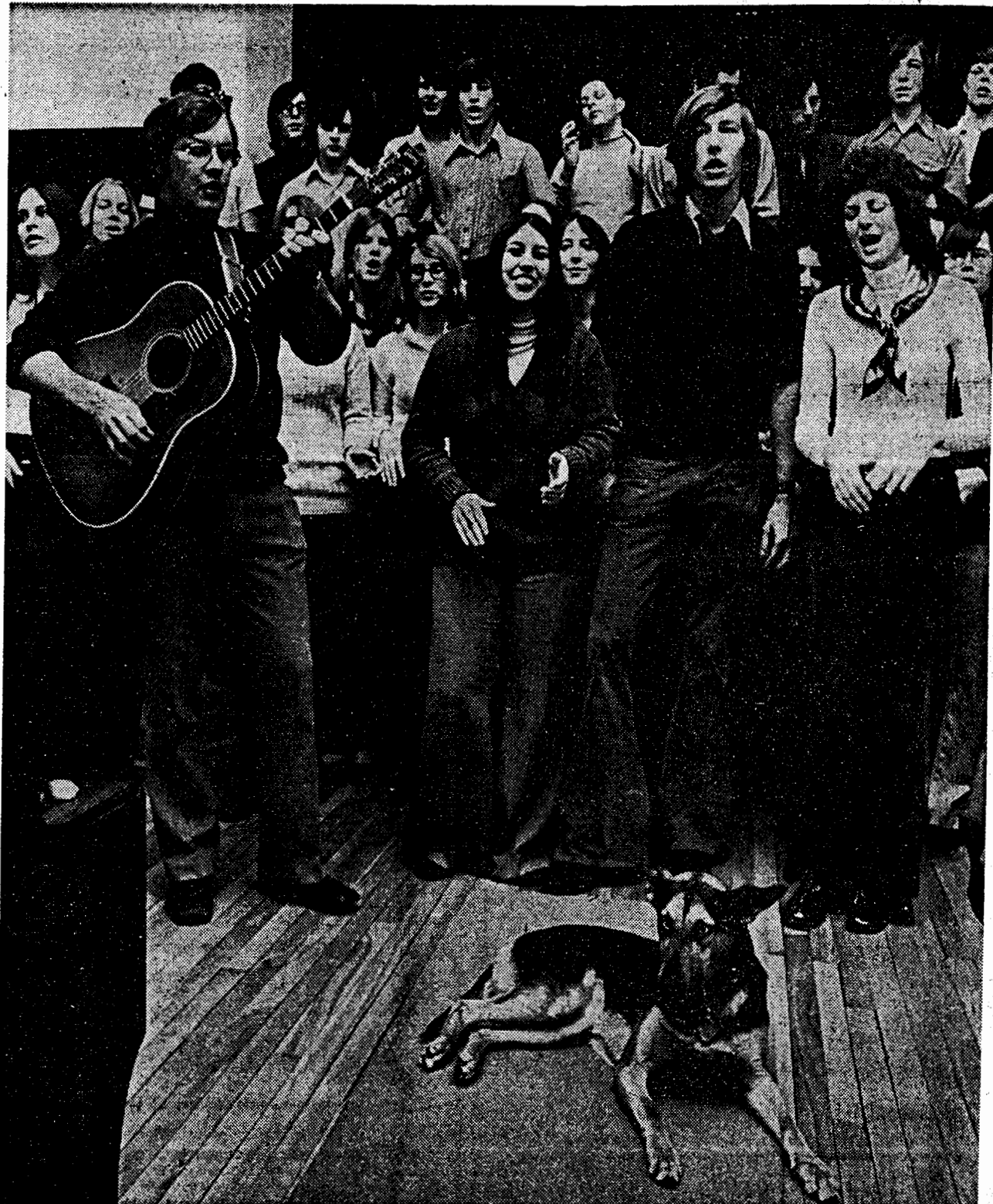


Shenandoah tried high C and blew the whole bit!



Staff Photo by Mac Juster

Mascot Shenandoah listens as Bob Mitchell (with guitar) leads choir ensemble.

Hear and Now folk-singers

By NORMAN WILLIAMS

Did you ever hear of a dog attending church services?

Well, I did. I investigated, found my informant was right and arranged to meet this remarkable canine.

The dog, Shenandoah, is the mascot of the Hear and Now folk-singing group of St. Lambert, and she accompanies them everywhere — even when they sing in church.

"The group has turned down invitations to sing at church services because permission was refused the dog to attend," Bob Mitchell, director of the singers and owner of the dog, said.

We were chatting at the time in the St. Lambert Baptist Church where the group meets weekly for practice. Beside us sat Shenandoah, her tail wagging eagerly as she listened to our conversation.

Shenandoah, or Shen as she is called for short, is a beautiful and highly intelligent dog of mixed breed. Her German shepherd ancestry is predominant, although she shows traces of collie and doberman pinscher blood. This is an ideal combination — for she has inherited the gentleness of the collie, the intelligence of the shepherd and the slim lines of the pinscher.

Shen is a founding. Her master came across her on a cold December night in 1970 wandering the streets of St. Lambert, apparently lost.

"I took her home, thawed her out and gave her something to eat," Mr. Mitchell recalled. "She was just a half-grown pup of six months or so but we immediately took to each other. I hated the thought of having to give her up but felt I had to find the owner. And after a two-day search I finally located the man who lived a few blocks from the spot I found her. He apparently did not think much of the dog as he readily agreed to sell her for the \$4 he had paid for her licence. Naturally, I snapped up the offer and the dog was mine. Later I named her Shenandoah after the song of that name.

"It was the best \$4 I ever spent, for Shen is a real pal and is with me practically every minute of the time I am not teaching maths at Richelieu Valley High School.

"Naturally when I founded the folk-singing group in March of last year Shen accompanied me to practices and was immediately adopted as mascot by the 50-member group that is made up mostly of high school and college students ranging in age from 15 to 20 years. The only older members are Rev. Hugh Burritt, the young minister of the church, who is an enthusiastic singer, and myself. A few of the group are recent high school graduates who are now working "

tient and started poking me with her paw.

"Aren't you going to talk to me?" she seemed to be saying with an engaging grin, her tongue hanging roguishly from the side of her mouth.

I looked at her in amazement.

"And you talk too?" I asked.

"Of course; most dogs can if there is something worthwhile to say and they want to say it," she replied.

"That's fine with me but where do you want to start?"

"From the very beginning or at least as far back as I can remember," she replied primly.

"When was that?"

"Let me see," she said pensively as she settled down comfortably her head resting on her two paws. "I was roughly six months old when my present master rescued me from the cold, and that was in December of 1970 so that would be May or June of that year."

"The first thing I remember was the furry warmth of my mother who lived on a farm somewhere in the Eastern Townships; exactly where I don't know.

Mascot missing

Since this article was written, Shenandoah has been reported missing from her daytime home in St. Lambert. Further information at 672-7706.

"Then I remember playing with my five brothers and sisters. When I was seven or eight weeks old I was picked up and I heard a voice say: 'I'll have this one.' I was placed in a box filled with soft cloth and taken away to the city where I was made much of by the children of the family. Despite this, I was lonesome for my mother and brothers and sisters.

"As I grew older the children lost interest in me and I grew more lonesome than ever.

"One night in December I was let out as usual late in the evening. I wandered down the street as puppies often do and lost my way. I was standing there shivering with the cold and not knowing what to do when I felt a gentle hand on my head and a kind voice say: 'What's the matter pup, you lost?' I wagged my tail gratefully and when the owner of the voice called I followed him to his nearby home, where I was given a good supper and put to bed. I tell you it was heaven and it's been heaven ever since, for the man who found me was my present master."

"What do you think of this singing group your master directs?" I asked.

"They're just super, every one of them," Shen replied. "As you already

out me. I go to all rehearsals and performances, even when they sing in church — for they insist that I've got to be with them at all times. I tell you it is a grand feeling to know that 50 people love you so much.

"And I know every single one of them, even if I meet them on the street."

"How do you like church?" I asked.

"It isn't too bad but I just can't stay awake during the sermons," she replied.

"I was awfully embarrassed once, however," Shen said with a reminiscent look in her eyes.

"What happened?"

"Well, the gang was singing that tail-thumping song Put Your Hand in the Hand at a church service when I made the most terrible faux pas.

"I got carried away by the music and joined in the singing with my beautiful alto voice. I tried to reach high C."

"And then?" I asked.

"No one appreciated it, even the gang, for everyone stopped singing, looked at me in amazement and then burst out laughing.

"I tell you I felt awful. I slunk off and hid under a pew until the service was over.

"I haven't tried that again either," she said with a ghost of a grin.

Here she abruptly changed the subject again.

"We had a good time last summer, but we're looking forward to an even better one this year," Shen said.

"How come?"

"Well, my master is applying for a grant through the federal government's Opportunities for Youth program which would allow the group to give performances in Quebec and Ontario. He hopes he can get it as such a grant would give employment to 30 or more young people during the summer months."

At this point Mr. Mitchell broke in.

"We hope to get the grant for we're an inter-denominational group that gives varied programs of folk songs, hymns and popular music, tailoring our offerings to fit church services, benefit performances or variety concerts," he explained. He added that the group had taped a CBC television program which was shown last January. It proved such a success, he said, that it will be repeated on a Tuesday evening show in the near future."

At this point Shen ended the interview.

"I guess there isn't much more to add to what I have already told you," she said with a flick of her tail, "so I will say au revoir with the hope that you'll come and hear one of our performances."

Choir mascot found

Shenandoah, the dog who goes to church, has been found.

Missing nearly a week, the mascot of the Hear and Now folk singing group of St. Lambert, whose story was featured in the Design for Living pages of last Saturday's Star, was located as the result of a house-to-house canvass by the 50 members of the group and is now back with her owner, Bob Mitchell, director of the singers.

Shen, as the dog is called for short, wandered away last week from the home of a friend with whom she stays while her master teaches school at the Richelieu Valley Regional High School.

A search was immediately undertaken by the members of the group who think so much of Shen that she accompanies them everywhere, even when they sing in church.

Armed with photos of Shen, the group members started a canvass of homes in the area in which she disappeared. At first they met with no success but they kept up what appeared to be a hopeless task. Finally they got a hot lead.

A woman in the neighborhood said she had found Shen, apparently lost, and took her in. She checked the dog's collar tags and noticed one that carried the name of a local veterinary along with a number. She phoned the veterinary, who gave the woman the name of the family who

had previously owned the dog. She added that she had turned the dog over to them.

Mr. Mitchell was notified and he immediately went to the family from whom he had purchased the dog, found her there and, after rewarding the previous owner, brought her home.

"I immediately had a proper identification tag made for Shen, carrying my address and phone number," Mr. Mitchell said, adding that the dog won't be allowed out alone again unless she is properly chained.

"We all think too much of her to take any more chances," he concluded.



Shenandoah