



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen
November/December 2021 - Issue #30



President's Message:

By Nancy Hennefer

December 8th 2021.....my last message as your President. Have been sitting here trying to figure out what mind bending, thought provoking and inspirational words I could type. But honestly, I got nothin." Unless you consider the fact that we made it through some of the darkest days, weeks, months (dare I say years) in modern history. Sadly, we said goodbye to some loyal and dear members; some of whom we will still be able to keep in touch with and others we will cherish in our hearts and memories. Others found themselves dealing with surgeries, illnesses, and other bits of life's messiness.

Fortunately, under the guidance of Director Bill and a few dedicated and enthusiastic members, the chorus kept on, climbing back up and has even welcomed a couple of new voices! We had a few gigs and were even invited to sing in Hawaii for the 80th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor...which would have been TODAY, (although if you watched the news, the islands are having one of the biggest storms ever, so I guess it wasn't meant to be!) We ARE on the invite list for Normandy, 2023!

Bummer: missed our annual Installation Dinner, Ice Cream Social and 4th of July sing and had to cancel our Annual Picnic in August. Spring and Fall contests were also canceled.

We had a successful showing on Memorial Day and weathered the cold at the recent Festival of Trees. For the first time, items and storage at Zion were dealt with head on. Thank you to those that spent a very long Saturday back in October, cleaning, hauling, drilling, and sweeping. Most of our “treasures” are now all together in the revamped storage container in Zion’s parking lot.

The last sing of 2021 will be at the Fox theater on the 12th. A good old fashioned caroling party is planned for the 21st. Installation Dinner being planned for January. We’re hopeful for Singing Valentines and the Ice Cream Social is still on the books for March. In addition, competitions will be gearing back up (with or without us). There are many things to look forward to!

Although the list of activities and projects I had on my list 2 years ago were not to be, I do want to give thanks to you all. It was an honor to serve as the first female president of the Stockton Portsmen.... but we all know the first true female representative is Joan Ray! Thank you, Joan, for leading the way for the rest of us women!

I am grateful and hopeful that incoming president Al Wolter will guide the Portsmen down the path of our potential. We will continue to support each other, both vocally and socially. We will circle the wagons when misfortune shows its head to any of us individually or collectively. Because, you see, we are not just a group of people who like to sing, nor just a group of friends and acquaintances, WE ARE A FAMILY.

Sending out Love Notes for the last time,

Nance

France 2023 anyone???

Musical Director's Message: By Bill Litz

During October and November, I had some extra time to do some woodworking. Projects included shelving in a closet organizer and a headboard with floating nightstands that matched some bedroom furniture we already had. Each project required several tools and skills that were used in different ways. Some tasks used skills and tools that were completely new to me, while others employed abilities and equipment that I already had (or at least I thought I had).

There were times I was disappointed at my execution of an idea, cutting something wrong or making a blemish that I should have avoided. As I was working through the errors, I had a thought – Small imperfections can draw your focus and attention, but at some point, they become the character of the piece. In the end, I was shocked at how good the outcome was. I learned to celebrate each victory. But more importantly I was able to have pride in how I dealt with the things that didn't go perfectly. As I look at the finished work, I am pleased with the things that look perfect. When I notice the flaws that probably no one else does, I am proud of the things I learned and how I overcame difficulties.

Translating the art of woodworking (or some other artistic endeavor that you might have) into making music has some parallels. There are skills that we have. There are skills that need to be developed. It actually takes practice to build skills you don't already have (or to improve your abilities). Work on your craft:

- Sing *Scales* and *Intervals* to be able to negotiate the different paths a melody may take
- Practice different *vowels and words* on *Scales* and *Long Tones* to make the sounds language needs
- Work on singing with different *Dynamics* to be able to sing *loud or soft* when the music requires it
- Focus on *breathing* to be able to sing longer, artistic phrases
- Practice singing *higher and lower* pitches than normal to *extend you range*
- Use *posture* and *mouth shapes* to find a *resonant, consistent* sound

Then connect all your skills to create music artistry. Use your mind to design a musical work of art. Trust the talents that you've developed and use new ones to make a flawless masterpiece.

The art of singing, and making music, is different from many other art forms in that as quickly as you create sound, it dissipates. The exciting part about that is, we don't need to look at the blemishes in our artwork every day. We get to use what we've learned to create music better than the last time we sang.

Take advantage of being able to create a new and beautiful work of art every time you sing.

Caroling at Festival of Trees

(Thanks Geral for the pictures!)



"PARTY TIME"

Oh, oh it's party time! It's time to get you off my mind.

This month's title snippet is from a **T. G. Sheppard** Country song that was released in 1981. As the year rushes to a close, the Holidays are usually filled with parties – the gathering of friends and family to celebrate the year and the promise of the future.

We, as **Portsmen**, are no different. We gather together to install our new Board members and honor our “go getters” which I have talked about the past couple of articles.

But there are other parties we should have. The one we have missed the past couple of years because of the pandemic and then bad air quality canceled the Picnic. While the Installation Dinner is a semi-formal adult dinner, the Picnic is intended for the whole family to get together and experience what we do each Tuesday night. I will say that some of the reasons I am a Barbershopper are the interactions I had with my Dad's Chapter at Picnics and family outings.

There is one more regular party we have been enjoying the past few years, the Holiday Party. It too has been more of an adult party, but we have enjoyed good food (most have been pot-luck), fun and games with “cut-throat bingo ornament exchanges” and other such things. These have been mostly held at someone's home (has to be a rather large space), but we are open to ideas of other venues.

Seems like that would be about it, but alas there are a couple of other ‘gatherings’ that could and should be viewed as a party: these are the Barbershop Conventions. There are several each year and I think this would be a good time to talk about each one. There is a Divisional Convention in the Spring. Back in the day, each Division had their own event, where Chapters in the Division would gather to share their songs. These days the two Northern and two Southern California Divisions hold a joint Convention. There are two District Conventions, where the District Board meets. One is held in the Spring, normally with a Division Convention, and the other in the Fall. During the Fall Convention, representatives from each Chapter are delegated to attend a meeting to elect the District Board, approve the District Budget and any changes to By-laws.

The Society holds two conventions each year, the first titled “Mid-Winter” and the last and biggest convention is the “International” convention which is held around the Fourth of July. Each of these gather members throughout the Society and its affiliates throughout the world to share song, education, and administration of the hobby we love.

Now at each of these conventions, there are opportunities to share a song with friends all over and meet new ones. Oh, there are contests for quartets and choruses to be evaluated and gain understanding on how to improve (well okay – that's the politically correct way of looking at it) and winner is crowned.

There is a hierarchy to all these conventions and contests. The idea provides a path to Glory for both a quartet and a chorus. Since each is different, the paths are slightly different. Since we are a Chapter with an active chorus, I will start with the chorus path.

The first step on this path is the Divisional Convention and its Chorus Contest. The winner is entered into the District Fall Convention's Chorus Contest. If you say, well that's just five choruses, you are right – that wouldn't be much of a show. So there is a score 'target' that when you get that or above, you join the winners. The Winners and high scoring Choruses then are able to compete in the International Chorus Contest in July. That is a year and a half of dedication to perfection.

The path for quartets is somewhat similar, but it has a shortcut wrinkle to get to International. But first, the average quartet starts at the Division level and goes to the Fall District to compete for the District Championship. As a District Champ, your name is forever reserved in the District. There are some rules about Champion quartets and their presence in contests in the future that I need to brush up on, but it is immaterial to this discussion about parties. I will say that once you win the Far Western District Quartet Crown you are invited to become a Scorpionaire, which is an exclusive party in itself.

Now I am sure you are asking "does that quartet go the International Contest?" And the answer is no, not really. Remember that Spring District Convention? It is the home of the International Preliminary Quartet Contest. In this contest, past District Champs and other International hopefuls sing for a score to qualify to go to International. The Spring Prelims are that shortcut I talked about earlier – you can go to International with never competing in any other contest (rare, but not unheard of).

There are other contests within these contests, Novice Quartets, Senior Quartets, Super-Senior Quartets. The Seniors compete at Mid-winter for the ultimate Championship.

There are a couple of other contests that float around. One is the Comedy Quartet Contest in Southern California – the PalPac Chapter hosted this for a long time. Not sure what its status is currently. There are Novice Quartet contests in both the North and South Divisions. In these contests (at least in NorCal), unlike the regular contests, the quartet does not need to be registered with the Society – so four folks can make up a quartet and sing, you just can't have more than two members who have competed before.

That's a lot of partying if you go at it the right way, especially if you go to the afterglows and Hospitality Suites.

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

Come gather 'round people wherever you roam...

This month's title snippet is from the Bob Dylan's hit song that was released in 1964. As the year crashes to its close, the future by nature makes this so true. As an aside, Bob is the kind of artist that has always made me wonder just how they became 'stars' as his voice and style are so peculiar – but that in many ways is the answer to my question.

Well onto the changing times, as in this issue will be Nancy's final article as President and this is my transition from Vice President for Chapter Development & Membership to President. In addition, this will be my last educational Chapter Development article about our Social Activities (aka parties). As the year comes to a close, we have had some movement back to our activities of the past with singing at Micke Grove for the Festival of Trees and at the Fox / Bob Hope Theatre for the showing "White Christmas." From a Chapter Development point of view, these events provide opportunities to expose the community to Barbershop Harmony and hopefully convince them to either join us or at least buy a ticket or Valentine.

As we move into 2022 and I take over the helm from Nancy, I want to indicate some of the directions I hope to steer our Portsmen ship towards. First, many incoming Presidents tend to set lofty goals but, with the pandemic crisis showing little sign of truly abating and thus the political infighting remaining, I hope to be more realistic (yes, I know that politics and religion do not belong as a part of the Chapter in general, but both are real in our life individually and yield a lot of influence in our lives). Therefore, my major goal is to keep the Portsmen alive – no worse than we are now. We may not be where we would hope to have been two years ago, but we are making music and the 11 average attendees since Memorial Day have grown in confidence. I am overall pleased with what we have currently. It has been a real treat to have had Steve rejoin us, Alan and Brad join us, and Isiah being a consistent visitor with intentions of joining us. It is always great when past members come back for at least a visit, like Paul Grant and Stephanie Thurman.

Next, I hope that we can return to making a dollar or two, but I am thankful that we have done all that we can to keep control of our spending. A goodly portion of that belongs to our devoted leader, Bill Litz, as he refused payment when we were totally out of commission. We also eliminate the cost of the storage unit, by moving things back to the Church and into the SeaVan (by the way, thanks again to all those who worked on that – we still have work to do, but we are stored away). As I hope you all know, one way to help bring funds in (no matter the pandemic situation) is to select the **Stockton Portsmen Barbershop Chorus** when ordering from Amazon Smile. If you are a charitable giver, you can donate up to 30% of your donation to the Harmony Foundation International back to the Chapter. Still, if we can continue to have the

funds to pay for some music (yeah, could be time for a new song), pay Bill for his efforts, and keep our governmental and Societal obligations paid, that would be a good thing.

Now I know more than a couple of you think I am giving up, but no. I believe that before we can start moving forward, we have to be secure where we are. Once we are confident about that, knowing who we are and why we do what we do, then the forward progress will come.

Lastly, as I type this, it is the eve of the Pearl Harbor attack. While we had a great time doing the traditional things for the first weekend of December, it would have been very special to be in Hawaii to participate in the 80th Anniversary activities. The events would have been very poignant and humbling. We are losing the last of those that were there and those that responded to stop the spread of, for lack of a better term, imperialism. Both sides of the Axis Powers practiced that misguided political ideal. Wish the times that changed then weren't seemingly changing back to them – but the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Here is to 2022 anyway!

MEMBER UPDATES

We do have some disappointingly happy news. Our good friend and past member, Diana Goodwin, has taken a new job in Tennessee and is moving before the end of the year. It was great to have her join us at Micke Grove and we wish her and her husband Will well – she will be missed.

In that same vein, Greg Hedges is headed back to Kansas after nearly 40 years here in Manteca. As a versatile singer and the Baritone of Tune Struck for 12 years, his departure will be very impactful, but you really can't blame him for taking Geral to be with her grandchildren. Tune Struck has told him he has to plan on being here for the first weekend of December next year – just cause.

TUNE STRUCK QUARTET

After a seven-week hiatus for Walnut Harvest, a trip back in Kansas for the Hedges' to attend a wedding, and then a little surgical work, we gathered to celebrate Bob's belated birthday and the recently passed Thanksgiving holiday with a soup, salad and steak dinner. The eight of us had a grand time with lots of laughter and of course we had to sing through the Christmas repertoire, even with an unfit for replication barking-dog version of Jingle Bells.



Unfortunately, this was where it was confirmed that Greg and GERAL would be moving to Kansas shortly. The story is long and contentious, but the gist is that Greg is a Kansas native and his youngest now has an awesome job there. We don't know what we are going to do yet, but we are keeping our options open – just wish them well.

It was nice to be able to step out on Saturday during the Festival of Trees to sing a song or two in support of the Chapter. The Festival of Trees has been a long-standing opportunity for both versions of Tune Struck to share the sounds of the Season and support the Portsmen.

Another long-standing tradition has been the Dillard's VIP Holiday Shopping Event, where we share songs to the invited VIP Shoppers as they enter the store for the first hour and then stroll around the store serenading the shoppers and the staff. One of the highlights as the evening comes to a close is singing for the staff at the Cosmetic Counters, especially for Viktorya – whose enthusiasm always lifts our tired voices for just one more song.



She played the cello with a touring orchestra from Russia and just loves what we do, always an honor to have folks like her, Bill Stephens and Nick Isaak express their appreciation. It is always fun to share songs with the other acts that are contracted to participate in the evening. Here are a few photos from the past:



2019 with Bill Stephens and Nick Isaak



2019 with Susan and Marcia - Dillard's Admins



2013 Singing with then-Portsmen Ben Buckman and Strings

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Location: Zion Lutheran Church – 808 W. Porter Avenue – Stockton – CA

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

See calendar for up-to-date information:

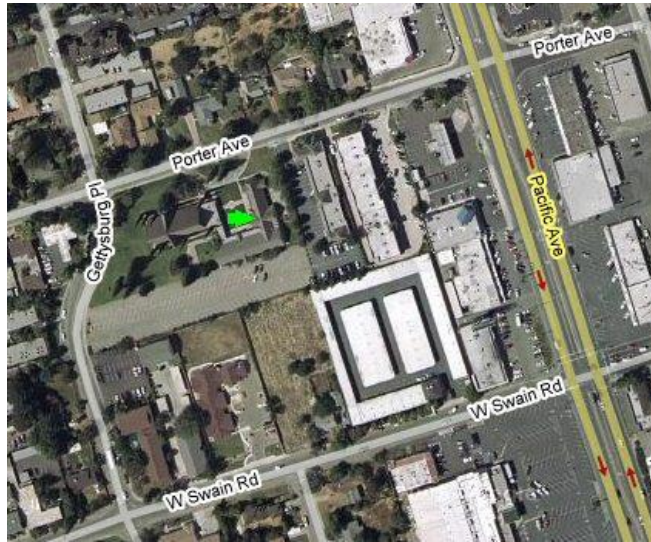
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

Website:

<http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/194542747456>



Directions:

- From Pacific Avenue go west on Porter Way turn south on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into the Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.
- From Pershing Avenue go east on W. Swain Rd turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.

Mission Statement:

Provide the greater Stockton area with quality Barbershop chorus and quartet music and wholesome family entertainment, while encouraging every individual of good character who loves to sing the opportunity to find their place with us.

Hire Us:

Book us for your next event:

- Community Concerts
- Fairs
- Festivals
- Grand Openings
- Holiday Tree Lightings
- Memorial Services
- National Anthem
- Singing Valentines
- Summer Concerts

Performance times usually range from 20 to 40 minutes but can be adjusted up or down to fit your specific program. Contact us by email or phone below for a proposal:

- Info@StocktonPortsmen.org
- Phone (209) 881-SING (7464)

****SAVE THE DATE****

- 12/4 Festival of Trees
- 3/10 – 3/13 FWD Spring Convention: Prelims, SE/SW Divisions
- 3/20 Stockton Portsmen Ice Cream Social
- 5/13 – 5/14 NE/NW Divisions Convention
- 7/3 – 7/10 International Convention (Charlotte, NC) [Link to see jam-packed schedule](#)
- 10/12 FWD Fall Convention (Fresno, CA)

Barbershop Links

- Barbershop Harmony Society <http://www.barbershop.org/>
- Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>
- Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>
- VoCal Voices of California <http://voicesofcalifornia.org/>