



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

July 2022 - Issue #36

President's Message:

By Al Wolter



THE VIEW FROM THE HELM

Mid-Year Evaluations! – ISSUE 7

As I write this, it is mid-June, basically the middle of the year, and good time to pause and see where we are. As you read this, it will be July and at the July Board Meeting – a review of the Budget will be on the agenda.

I started thinking about this earlier, as we started to really feel like we were getting closer to the way things have been in the past (before we learned about the new strain of the Corona Virus unleashed in 2019). The following is from my last article of 2021 as I transitioned to President: <http://stocktonportsmen.org/images/TheCaptainsLog-2021-12-Issue030.pdf>

“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.”

Six or so months later, we are so much more than where we were in 2019, and our eleven regulars have returned to 17 or so we can count on. The fact that our average age has dropped a notch or two is an even better thing.

I was so very proud that 11 Portsmen (9 regulars, **Les Cudsworth** and **Tom Harmon** [waiting for him to give in and dual-up]) attended the return of the **Been Feed & Somewhat Serious Quartet Contest** now in Folsom. That fact that every one of those Portsmen in attendance were on stage in at least one foursome shows the growth in individual confidence that will continue to propel us forward. Now were all those foursomes perfect – ah, no. But was there growth in each individual and I hope that they found things to work on to improve themselves for the next time. THIS is what propels each of us forward, and as a rising tide lifts all boats, an individual's improvement improves the group to which they are a part

As I said earlier, during the July Board Meeting I want to review our Budget performance – I mean we have added new members, gained funds from the **Spring Prelims Contest/Convention**, and received funds from the **Harmony Foundation** – as donations from members were directed back to us. There are things that we have done during the Pandemic to adjust to the fact we stopped making performance income. But this has started to change, as more performances are starting to be scheduled. Like the Been Feed, we are back to singing for the **Hutchins Street Square, Lodi's 'Celebrate America'** and the **Friends of the Fox's** showing of **'Independence Day'**. There is a **Stockton Ports** Anthem sing trying to be scheduled. There are other things in the scheduling fire, like a Remote Rehearsal at **O'Conner Woods** and a performance for the **Philomathean Club** in the Fall.

The Music Committee has started thinking about the next Show, trying to schedule it in the Spring of next year, in such a way that it doesn't conflict with other items of note, like Division and District Contests and other Chapter Shows.

Overall, I say that the Chapter is solidly standing and moving forward faster than expected and/or anticipated. This has everything to do with YOU – your desire to sing and fellowship. If we continue to strive for the things we have already focused on, the rest of the year should be equally rewarding.

Musical Director's Message: By Bill Litz

How do you define **success** in your barbershop journey? Is it singing on the international contest stage in a quartet or chorus? Is it performing on a local show for family and friends? Is it teaching others how to harmonize?

I think those are good goals, but they all hinge on becoming a better singer/performer.

I think I can safely say that all of us consider ourselves to be amateur singers and for barbershop to be a hobby. I've never heard anyone say that they don't want to be a better singer or a better entertainer. What kind of commitment does it take to move up the scale from **novice toward expert?**

Malcolm Gladwell discussed in his bestseller, **"Outliers"**, *to become an expert it takes 10000 hours (or approximately 10 years) of deliberate practice*. Talent and a love for singing/performing will definitely speed your journey, but it's important to rack up quality hours focusing on things that can move you along the scale. And those tasks to get there will be mostly about making yourself better.

- Singing in tune and understanding where your part is in balancing the sound
- Memorizing songs and visual schemes to make for entertainment

- Developing a larger range in both notes and expression
- Work with others by bringing your best and encouraging them to do so

Honestly, If we were going to be expert singers/performers, we'd probably already be professionals. But that doesn't mean that we can't be very entertaining. Barbershop style allows us to build upon each other's talents to make wonderful performances that can bring enjoyment to our audiences. One might say Barbershop allows ordinary singers to do extraordinary things.

I have a very **YES** oriented mindset. I believe that in order to be successful that we need to say **YES** and do things. We need to do things like: be at rehearsals with an involved attitude; practice between rehearsals ; take advantage of opportunities to perform; sing in a quartet or a small group. There can be so many opportunities to say **YES** to that we can get overwhelmed and over committed.

Steve Jobs said, *"People think focus means saying yes to the thing you've got to focus on. But that's not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully"*. I've felt that struggle of wanting to be better but not having the focus to stay on track. What does he mean we should say **NO** to?

- Say no to cluttering your mind.
- Say no to interruptions.
- Say no to time robbers and yes to time locking.
- Say no to your own unbelief.

A reoccurring theme in getting focus is scheduling your time. In order to get hours in toward becoming an expert, use your time more wisely.

- Set a time to practice at home – 90 minutes a week IS NOT going to learn the notes and words.
- Come to as many rehearsals as possible – missing doesn't help you learn to harmonize.
- Schedule what you want to work on – what songs – what expression – work on the difficult spots

As you spend the time – focused time – on becoming extraordinary, you will feel that success of being a key player in the success of the Stockton Portsmen. If a bunch of ordinary singers can do extraordinary things, imagine what is possible if we are all extraordinary.

TUNE STRUCK QUARTET

The month of June was another quiet month, with few opportunities to sing, either in rehearsal or performance. Work and family always come first and sometimes get in the way of fun, and June was like that.

We did have one special time together, as all five of the members of **Tune Struck** and their significant others enjoyed a Welcome and Goodbye dinner. The evening was hosted by **Chuck** and **Isaura**, as the new folks to be welcomed. The rest of us brought food to share. **The Hedges'** brought some beef from their freezer that would be hard to transport as pasting gifts from those with which we must say goodbye.

The evening was full of song and conversation, stories about the past and the plans for the future. As there were more than three potential Leads, and two Baritones, each version sang some and then there were lots of part swapping and singing as a very large quartet. Even **Sue** was cajoled into joining us to sing ***Come Fly with Me***.





It truly was a bittersweet evening, as it was hard to say goodbye to **Greg** and **Geral**, with them being a part of **Tune Stuck** for nearly 13 years. Greg was the Lead of Al's second quartet, **Right From the Start**, with **D.J. Ramsey-Warner** and **Dave Kester**. That's a lot of music to which to say good-bye.



Right from the Start Quartet



2000 Third Place Novice

We are sure Greg will help the Topeka KS Chapter to be better, but we are going to miss him.

Harmony Camp 2022



MIDTOWN

INTERNATIONAL 5th PLACE FINALISTS

Along with four topnotch clinicians:

Gabe Caretto, Ron Black, Chris Lewis, and Bruce Sellnow

October 21-23, 2022

Sly Park Educational Center

5600 Sly Park Road, Pollock Pines

\$100 for the entire weekend

This is an Educational, Tag singing, Fun filled, weekend capped off with a Friends and Family Show Sunday morning at 11 am

Richard Lund 530-621-1904 rlund@innercite.com

<https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/events/youth-harmony-camp>

TO SING OR NOT TO SING (BY AL WOLTER)

Have you ever stopped to think about why the Barbershop Harmony Society and therefore why the Chapter exists? Why did the evening on the Terrace of the Hotel in Tulsa have to happen? Did the creation of the Society for the Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America mean that everything was good and the situation that led up to that first meeting would never occur again?

I hope that everyone who reads this knows about O.C. Cash and Rupert Hall and the Tulsa Club and Tulsa Hotel. If not, you can find information in the History Section of Barbershop.org.

In that write up, it indicates the reason why the Society was created: "In 1938, men harmonizing together had not completely died out, but it was becoming rarer and certainly much less popular than 30 years before." Part of that was that "close harmony existed even though it was no longer the most popular music of the day," but if you ask me, it was the advent of 'the radio'. Songs that can be sung in our close harmony style, as we know, are not exclusive to popularity, but close harmony does create issues for Sound Engineers. The generation of expanded sound (overtones and undertones) and our propensity for emotional dynamics does not lend itself to uncompressed sound transmission and reproduction. I remember having to raise and lower the volume on the car tape player to hear the softs and protect your ears from the louds.

But the radio hadn't been around that long, definitely not 30 years. So, what else happened? Well, for one the world got smaller. Besides the radio, there was the telegraph and then the phone. Then the first World War took boys out of rural communities and off farms, and in the words of the song: "how ya gon'na keep down on the farm after they've seen Paris?" Another was the conflicted view of many regarding the style: disdain because it is either too simple or too hard.

So, the full answer is the Society was created due to the changing world. Since the world never stops changing – always newer popular songs, always technological advances, always newer distractions to consume people's focus and free time, the need for a new solution never goes away.

To that end, the solution in 1938 appears not to be as effective as once was. Why? One reason is that in 1938, singing was something everyone did. The majority of the populace attended worship services where singing was an integral part, choirs and Glee Clubs were the norm and Sports Teams had their songs that all the fans knew and sang regularly. None of that is really true now. Worship services are led by loud bands that worshippers are more than happy to let sing on their own (yes, I know everyone is encouraged to sing along - but how many really do), popular music is more about rhythm than notes and vocals are just another component of the music, choirs and Glee Clubs are more and more homes for elite singers and less the norm, and while those Sport Team songs still exist – fewer folks know or sing them.

So how does the second end of close harmony get suspended? More bands, rhythm based popular songs, Elite Choirs, Sport Teams? Since those things have existed and possibly assisted in making the average person to not participate (even disparage said participation), I say no. What is necessary is to demonstrate that singing is something that the average person can enjoy and encourage that participation in every turn.

But lately, instead of working to stem the tide, the efforts have been more in keeping with the actions that jeopardize our existence. The Societies move into the 21st Century and it's 'Everyone in Harmony' widens the pool of potential members but does little to change the overall direction to the cliff.

The ever-growing drumbeat is for the forced adaptation of popular songs, resulting in music that is ever-more difficult to sing; for better and better scores, resulting in more and more elite organizations who have less public performances (not enough time to perfect hard songs even with elite singers to waste on distractions –especially ones that don't generate funds to pay for the quest of the best).

The fact that there are new organizations being formed indicates that many people can see the proverbial handwriting. But will these help or hinder. The jury is out for me. Some are in objection to decisions like 'Everyone in Harmony' while another is in keeping with it. Yet I don't see how they will help the average person find the joy in singing and most importantly close harmony singing.

Before the turn of the century (the 20th that is), one of the only respectable places for men to gather was the Barbershop. There, they could meet up with non-locals and learn new things like new songs. This is how we received our name.

There is nowhere where this happens anymore. Everyone seems to think that social media is where folks gather these days, and I will say I have Facebook 'friends' from around the world. Many are involved or interested in Barbershop singing. But there is little sharing of our style with non-singing folks.

If you have made it this far with me, you may be asking – what is this whole diatribe about, ‘where’s the apple, Al’? Well for starters, as a second-generation 35-year member, I see a number of folks that don’t know and don’t care about our Society and Chapter’s history; a misguided elitist view of participation in the Society in general; and a general disdain for public performances, especially those that don’t generate income.

Every Chapter needs to generate enough income to pay for its existence, but that existence is not only covered by its finances, but also by its membership. As we have noted, there was a time that people where in search of places to sing. Today, singers are looking for a recording contract, but everyone else is happy with Spotify and saying “I could never do that.” We need to continue to strive to change that.

I believe that there needs to be a considered balance to everything we do. We need performances that make money, but we need to be out in the community showing to average person that singing is fun, healthy and beneficial to everyone - physically and mentally. I believe that we can’t do everything, and jumping on a possible performance in the middle of preparations for an important event is both fool-hardy and counter-productive. It is true that you can have too much of a good thing.

To close, I hope you consider why we are here, why we do what we do. That you appreciate the simple but complex ‘close harmony’ that is the Barbershop Style. That you help us make money by selling Valentines, show tickets (any show we do); that you try to participate in every performance opportunity we have (that means you prepare yourself to sing in them too); and most importantly, you share with others why you are a member of this Chapter and our Society.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Location: Zion Lutheran Church – 808 W Porter Avenue (Stockton, CA)

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM (Fireside Room)

VLQ (Quarteting) 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM (except nights of board meetings)

(Please verify for location of rehearsal as it may change)

See calendar for up-to-date information:

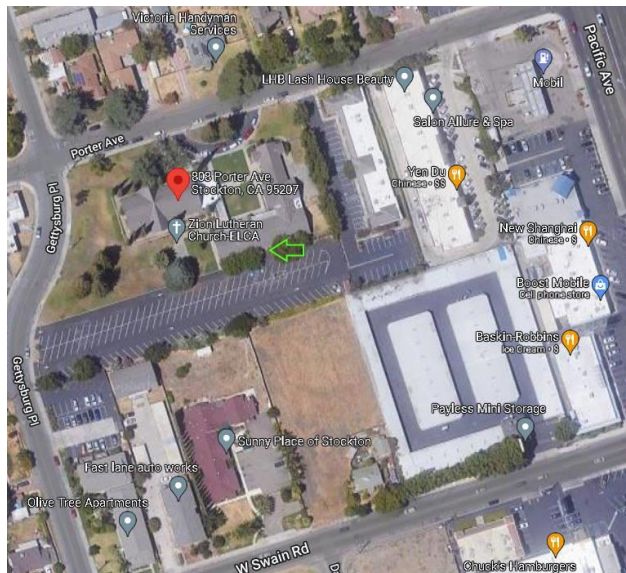
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsman Calendar](#)

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****

- 7/15 Friends of the Fox Cinema Classics (Independence Day)
(Doors open at 6pm) – Chorus
- 7/21 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11am – 1pm)
- **7/26 Remote Rehearsal & Chapter Meeting – O’Conner Woods,
3400 Wagner Heights Rd, Stockton, CA (7:00 PM – 8:30 PM)**
- 8/18 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11am – 1pm)
- 9/15 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11am – 1pm)
- 10/14 - 10/16 FWD Fall Convention (Fresno, CA)
- 10/20 Sacramento Harmony for Lunch Bunch (11am – 1pm)
- 10/21 - 10/23 Harmony Camp (Sly Park)

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/>