



# The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsman  
February 2023 - Issue #43

**President's Message:  
By Al Wolter**



## THE VIEW FROM THE HELM

### **SOMETIMES IT'S GOOD TO BE WRONG – ISSUE 14**

Most times when a person has made an error, they are not pleased. It means that things have not gone the way they were planned or desired and that is bad. Every once in a while, though, the errors are actually a good thing.

My "View from the Helm" last month had a number of errors. First, it was out before the Installation and Awards Banquet – good thing I didn't spill the beans on who was getting awarded and how. Next, I indicated that we had lost members, which included Derick Sturke dropping his dual membership. I am very happy that that error was caused by the Society messing up Derick's membership and has been corrected. Thus, to my joyfulness, I was wrong.

My last 'mea culpa' is not in that same vein, I encouraged Dave to book the bigger room at Papapavlos. Unfortunately, we didn't end up needing that space and it cost some of us a little more than it should have. But the event was great – I hope that all that attended feel the same. The food (well mine anyway) was delicious, the service great, and the space comfortable and welcoming. I fully expect that photos and such will accompany this 'View' in this edition of the "Captain's Log." All of you whom were unable to attend, first – know you were missed, and second – I hope that you will be among the throng that attends next year's event.

I know we were NOT wrong in recognizing our 2022 Awardees. Dianna Goodwin for literally 'going the extra mile', Alex Bernal as the 'Rookie of the Year', Bill Litz and Sue

Atkins as the President's 'Soaring Eagles', and our 'Barbershopper of the Year' Brad Nieman. Our dual-member, Past President, Divisional Vice President Installation Officer Chuck Roots was also not wrong in his readings from "Imperfect Harmony" about the benefits of singing and the comradery that is found amongst singers.

I also believe that there is a lot going for us here in Stockton, mostly because we act like a close-knit family. We love to see each other grow in our abilities and experiences, we are welcoming and supportive to both the first-time visitor and the long-time member. It was good to see Ron and Cynthia Allison in attendance and folks have good chats with him. Ron has had the longest membership with the Portsmen.

One last thing to say, I am happy I was wrong about, and that is that the Chapter just needed to stand. Now, don't let me be wrong about being able to move forward. We already have a quartet registered for Novice, but I will need everyone's assistance in making the event work. We have the show songs selected for the chorus to sing in May, with a total of four essentially new songs, the order of the songs and the script to introduce them (there are a number of expectations that need to be fulfilled to make everything work – but I feel confident we can work through them).

Here is to you keep making me wrong in all the good ways.

### **Musical Director's Message: By Bill Litz**

The last few messages have been short, so I'll probably make up for it here. Most amateur and even professional performers use music as they perform, except for performers that add drama to their performance. Even though it takes more time to memorize music, the benefit is that we are more able to express emotion while singing. How do we keep that emotion from being a "deer in the headlights" expression as we struggle to remember the nuances of the arrangements we attempt to perform.

I remember in high school singing "Shepherd Boy" where I was clearly making up words. For some reason, when I started singing barbershop, it seemed easier to remember the words. Maybe because I was singing melody to songs that are standards that I've heard hundreds of times over the years. But memorizing a harmony part or the words to a song I haven't heard before can still be a struggle.

Here are some ideas that I hope help make learning and memorizing music easier:

- **Analyze the song form** – In barbershop we use terms like *Intro, Verse, Chorus, Bridge, and Tag* to describe the sections of a song. As you learn a song, it helps to know those sections and how they are connected together.
- **Understand theme and variation** - Even though there might be multiple verses and repeated choruses, be aware of the different endings that could result in a tempo change or lead to a key change. Sometimes the arranger makes a slight harmonic change on each repeated section. Enjoy those nuances as you sing.
- **Find your Starting Note** – Understanding the key a song is in and what pitch will be blown is essential to a good start. I've seen even the best singer or chorus stumble for a few measures until all the singers come to a vocal agreement on what pitches each part should be singing.
- **Use learning tracks** – I considered saving talking about learning tracks for last because even though being a powerful way to learn, I think using them can be a crutch causing us to just sing along. But it is probably where we start most often – hearing a song that we like and using *auditory learning* skills to emulate it. They give us a good place to start by understanding the song and hearing the part you will get to sing. The key here is not to just listen, but to *listen actively*. Mouth the words while you listen. Sing softly to make sure you are doing it right. Finally, sing without your part playing to learn to harmonize. I listened to “Little Saint Nick” about a hundred times while I was doing a Christmas woodworking project, but it took all the different techniques that I'll discuss next to actually memorize the words and sing the right notes and rhythms confidently on my own.
- **Write down the words** – Typing the words or seeing them in your own handwriting engages *visual learning*. As you go through that process, consider what words are important and how they might be emphasized in the song. Space the words so that it can help you remember where to hold a note or when to shorten it.
- **Speak the words** – Barbershop style partners the way we speak to the music that we sing. The most significant parts of a dialog are usually on the most emphasized parts of the music. Feel those rhythms physically to engage *kinesthetic learning*. Tap out the rhythms to reinforce them physically. In *ballads*, the inflection often dictates changes in rhythm and drives the free-form way we sing them. In *up-tunes*, the poetic rhythm should be reflected in the rhythms of the song. If there is deviation to what is comfortable or expected, rhythms might need to be adjusted or emphasized.

- **Speak the words** (again) – This time consider the vowels and consonants we use to form words and the words we use to form sentences. In barbershop, we use spoken English as we sing. The words should sound natural, not contorted to shy away from the way we speak. Learn to speak/sing the vowels that make up a song with resonance – sometimes this might mean choosing a darker or lighter version of the vowel. For example, consider the word “dance” - traditional choirs might sing the *ah* vowel as in *bond*. I think we speak a vowel more like *bath*. But singing the word “dance” resonantly needs to be somewhere in between. Also, different dialects offer choices on how we might pronounce a word. Make a choice as a chorus or quartet that is right for the moment. If it is something different than you naturally think, make a note so you remember to do it *right*.
- **Sing the notes** (on neutral syllable) – Practice melodies that have awkward skips to keep notes connected. Mentally create a melody out of harmony parts to make it easier to remember. The words can get in the way of singing accurately or connecting the notes so practice the pitches on a single vowel or buzzing your lips. Words that have unsingable consonants (like c, f, h, p, s, t and x) create gap in the sound. We can accent the percussiveness, shorten the gap (by softening the emphasis of the consonant), or add pitch to the consonant that eliminate the gap and still sounds like we are singing the word (*little* vs... *liddle*).
- **Understand that silence is a part of rhythm** – Barbershoppers will talk about “A Wall Of Sound” where the music moves from chord to chord without a break. We strive to not interrupt that sound. But there are times when a rhythm requires a break or when a breath can be as moving as making a noise.
- **Know the “story of the song”** – Words give us something that instrumentalists don’t have – the ability to communicate thoughts and ideas precisely. Knowing the history of a song or author can help us understand the meaning and intent of the song. As we consider the words of a song, those words might speak to us in different ways. Use that understanding to remember what you want to communicate to the audience.
- **Have a *Visual* plan** – Thinking of this early in learning a song can create touchstones that remind us of specific words or why there is a repeat or why there is a variation to the song. In developing a visual plan, I often think what do “I” need to do? But we should have a different focus – Curate what you want the audience to see, feel and experience. When do I want them to smile – to laugh – to cry – to reminisce? That should spark how you move and the expression you share as you try to elicit their response.

- **Have a *Dynamics* plan** – Knowing what verse to sing *loud* and what phrase to sing *gently* gives reference points that make those sections more memorable – not just to us, but more importantly to the audience.
- **Work the hard parts** - It's usually pretty obvious what parts of a song aren't right. Work on those elements. Work them by yourself. Sing them in unison with your section. Duet with other parts. Get another member or a coach to help you work through it.
- **Put the whole thing together** - After doing all the work to fix the hard parts of a song, make sure to practice from the beginning to the end so you can navigate all the nuances of notes, words, dynamics and expressions that create artistry.
- **Practice Often** – I have two thoughts here. First, if you work a little every day, your subconscious will continue sorting out all the details while you are focusing on other things. Second, keep doing the songs (correctly) to file them in long term memory. I'm surprised by the fact that I've done a few songs in contest that I can't remember. Conversely, there are songs that I simply can't forget!

Work smarter, not harder. We could all use a bit more of **The Think System** developed by *Harold Hill* in *The Music Man*. Harold's quote isn't perfect (since we are a mixed group), so I'll modify it slightly. There are times when I stand in front of you before starting a difficult song and this thought runs through my head – **Think *Portsmen*. Think!!!**

## Celebrations

### February Birthdays

John Hunt	February 16 <sup>th</sup>
Sandy Mosley	February 23 <sup>rd</sup>



## INSTALLATION DINNER

### BARBERSHOPPER OF THE YEAR

BRAD NIEMAN



### ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

ALEX BERNAL





LITERALLY 'GOING THE EXTRA MILE'

DIANNA GOODWIN



PRESIDENT'S SOARING EAGLES

SUE ATKINS & BILL LITZ



# 2023 BOARD



# TUNE STRUCK

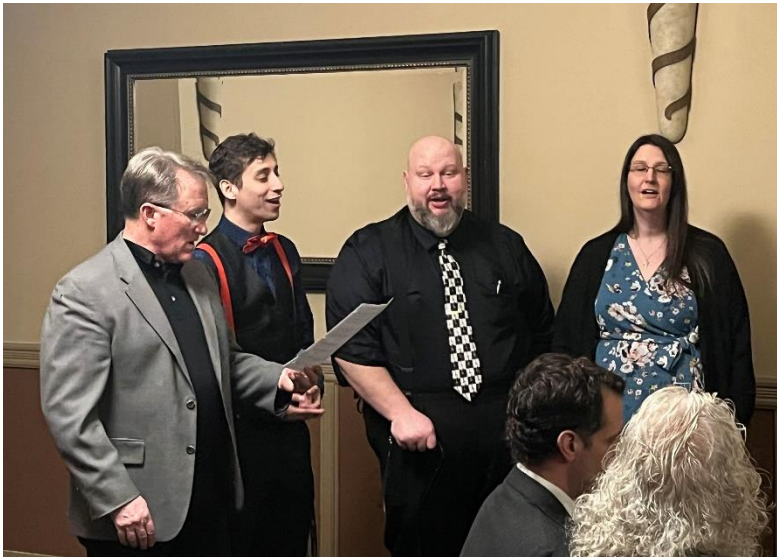




JOE HUNT, KITTY HARMON, TOM HARMON & ALEX BERNAL



JOE HUNT, ALEX BERNAL,  
CHUCK THURMAN & STEPHANIE THURMAN



## THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE

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Every once in a while, something happens that reminds you that there are good things in life. Thursday January 19, 2023 was one of those days.

For starters it was the regular scheduled meeting of the Harmony for Lunch Bunch. For you that don't know, the Greater Sacramento Area Harmony for Lunch Bunch (HFLB) has been meeting at Sam's Hof Brau for a very long time, 40 years or so I believe – I know I have been attending of and on since the 1990s after I was transferred to SMUD Headquarters at 59<sup>th</sup> and S Streets. The majority of attendees are members of the Sacramento Capitolaire, the Folsom Harmony Express and the now defunct Auburn Sierra-Nader's. We sing the old songs (sometimes really old) and tags, tell stories and have lunch.

This particular HFLB was attended by three other 'Portsmen' besides myself. There have been a number of us who have made the trip up over the years: Chuck Kenney, Sandy Mosley, Renee Beers, Laci Parker, Raphael Pazo, Al Farnum, Joan Ray, and others. Someone who made the trip up from Stockton this day was Steve Liepelt. Steve is a past Portsmen, serving as Director in the past. Always good to see old friends and get up to sing one of the tags with them.

Still, that is not why this day was special. Today was special as I had the pleasure of presenting an overdue Society membership card to the one-and-only Les Cudworth. Les has been a Society member for 66 years. In fact, if there were encyclopedias any more, the photo for the entry 'Joe Barbershop' would be of Les. Les joined the Stockton Chapter in 2018 to sing with us in Contest as a dual member, one of the four he holds membership in. He has attended International Conventions so much that when he wasn't present for the 2022 edition, they sang to him.

So, it was a true delight to present his membership card in front of his friends at HFLB. He wanted everyone to know that he appreciated his association with the Stockton Portsmen.



## 2023 SHOW COMMITTEE UPDATE

Hey folks, we finally have an Annual Show scheduled and set up. The premise came from past member Mike Buoniconti when he suggested a special post-pandemic show. So, we will be taking a Sentimental Journey – ‘A Musical Return to What Once Was’.

For the show, we will be using a number of songs that are in our current repertoire. We will introduce a couple of new songs from the PoleCat II book – they fit, and we hope you can sing them with other folks at conventions and the like. Lastly there are two new charts that we hope to use not only for the show, but to be our new Contest Set.

We also want to showcase all the foursomes that exist here in Stockton, even one that is really only a dream at the moment – but we have faith. Now there are opinions out there that only District qualifying quartets should be on a show, but our audiences don’t know anything about that. Most are family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers of those on stage. They came to see those they know and would be disappointed if they could see them sing in the quartet they had heard about. Now, singing not good is, well, not good. But we have time to work that one or two songs and make them the best they can be. As we laid out the songs, we talked to most of the quartets and got their feedback on the song(s) they think are their best that fits in the theme.

Now, we will start focusing our rehearsal time on the nine songs the chorus will sing. Now one of those songs is actually a medley of four or five songs (depending on if we add “This Little Light / Do Lord” to the end), but as they are PoleCats (from PoleCat I), we know most of them.

There have been requests for learning tracks on CD, and we are working on that – especially since not everyone has easy access to them in other ways.

We hope that you will feel confident in what we will be doing and thus will be proud and excited to share about the show with those afore-mentioned family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We should be getting confirmation from Zion that Saturday, May 6 will be our date and we can get Promotion materials out to social media and the Far Western District.

Lastly, as icing on a cake, we will have two guest quartets. The Claim Jumpers from Placerville and the highly likely 2023 District Quartet Champions “Never Too Late” from Reno. Having seen them several times, including their appearance on the Marin Show, I can tell you that they will be worth the price of admission.

## MEMBER PROFILE

### *Al Wolter*

One issue we should all have these days, talking about ourselves, is the use by nefarious people to disrupt our lives. But over the years I have had a number of people ask me about my background and how it is I came to be here.



There are a lot of factors that go into making a person into who they are, and like the Billy Joel song, we all have “‘the stranger’ ... that we hide away forever.” Each one of us can relate to all that and have our own factors – here are some of mine (keeping details to the minimum for personal protection).

Born in the Midwest to parents that met while singing. Dad, in the Navy stationed in California as an aircraft mechanic and singing with a Navy choir (good wholesome way to spend off-duty time) and Mom singing with her Church choir. A joint performance of the two groups occurred and the rest they say is history. Tour of duty over, they move back to Dad’s hometown where my brother and I are born only to move back to California due to Mom’s asthma, but not before Dad helps start the Beloit Barbershop Chapter.

I grew up in Southern California, traveling further south to work on my grandparents ‘farm,’ where beef cattle were raised, as well as hay, alfalfa, and sweet corn (which we sold for 75 cents a ‘bakers-dozen’). Lots of good times, weird happenings and the like happened there, but mostly where I figured out, I was not really the handy one – but the helpful one. Dad transferred his membership to the local Chapter in SoCal, and I always enjoyed the summertime opportunities to join him at Chapter Meetings.

School was kind of my happy place – except for the fact that I was the youngest in my class and one of the smallest. The physical and social aspects of education institutions have always been fraught with good and bad – helping kids learn not only their ABCs and such but how to get along with others (sort of). Dealing with those that feel entitled by money, physicality and/or position normally helps growth, but only when a proper support system exists for the learner. I was lucky in having loving, supportive and faith-based parents, and so knew ‘right-from-wrong’ and the consequences for ‘the wrong.’ This aspect led to some of my viewpoints since, especially when I joined the Navy.

Upon graduation, I spent the summer in the Midwest, working for a Pool Company and at an Outdoor Theater. I then spent a couple of years working with my father at a Lincoln-Mercury dealership in the Service Department. This led to helping one of the mechanics and his brothers race a Street-Stock at a local short track. Alas, things change – my youthful exuberance led to a bad decision and unemployment. Unemployment and a lack of direction led to enlisting at 22, but my scores sent me to the Navy Nuclear Power Program and then the Submarine Service. As I said earlier, the Navy either established or solidified a lot of my thinking.

While my ship was home in port, a nearby Chorus was headed to compete in the International Contest and came on base to perform a fund-raising concert. Being the son of a Barbershopper and having had lots of connections with shows and knowing about afterglows, since I wasn't on duty, I had to attend and then ask about the afterglow. Walking into the Pizza Parlor I was asked what part do you sing and what do you know. I thought I was a Tenor then, but really didn't know anything that I could sing on my own. Needless to say, after that I had to use my leave to go home and join Dad's Chapter. Of course, being a Submarine Sailor and a consumer of tobacco, I was no longer a Tenor. Still, I had started my Barbershop journey.

I really enjoyed my service, and there are a number of stories that come from my time in the service. But I was not fond of the single life and definitely didn't care for the married life in the service. Having folks and friends in the state, I wanted to relocate back here and applied for a number of jobs in energy services once discharged. While I had less desire for the radiation protection services associated with my Navy days, that is where I landed and as the first of the recent hires was tasked with updating documents. This led to meeting a certain red head that would become my life partner.

Transferring my membership to Stockton started a long association with the Chapter. But it hasn't always been bliss and I have been with the Sacramento and Central California Chapters as well as the Frank Thorne Chapter-at-Large. I have learned lots from each Chapter and always encourage folks to visit other nearby Chapters. Each Chapter is different, just as each member is different. My father and I had discussions about that, especially when the San Fernando Chapter moved down the hill and became the Santa Fe Springs Chapter and the Masters of Harmony Chorus. One key is to find the Chapter that suits you and your desires.

I am blessed to have found a home here and the ability to influence the Chapter into something that both myself and others find enjoyable. Being one of the now senior active members, and having an administrative, I feel that it is important to share both my viewpoints & experiences as well trying to encourage all that read these newsletters to get the best from their barbershop experience.



# Singing Valentines

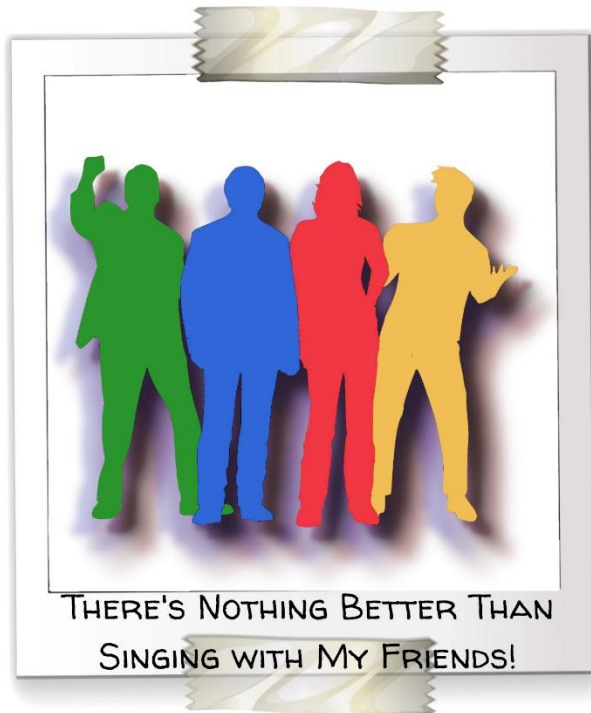
Sung by Barbershop Harmony Quartets  
All members of the  
Stockton Portsmen Barbershop Chorus

Package includes two great love songs,  
a lovely fresh rose and a valentine card  
with your personal message.



For details call: (209) 881-7464  
Or Email to [valentine@stocktonportsmen.org](mailto:valentine@stocktonportsmen.org)

# 2023 NorCal Novice Quartet Contest



THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN  
SINGING WITH MY FRIENDS!



EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:  
**INFO@STOCKTONPORTSMEN.ORG**  
OR CALL 209-747-7499



FOR REGISTRATION FORMS  
AND CONTEST RULES GO TO:  
**WWW.STOCKTONPORTSMEN.ORG**

## THERE WILL BE 2 CATEGORIES:

- 1) REGULAR (ANY 4 BHS MEMBERS)
- 2) HIGHSCHOOL (ANY 4 STUDENTS)

**\$10** PER QUARTET MEMBER

**\$10** GENERAL ADMISSION

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

**MARCH 9**

MAXIMUM OF **20** QUARTETS

# QUARTET MUSTER

## **Tune Struck**

January saw the start of an escalation of performances for Tune Struck. As we approached our first anniversary of our current configuration, we started to feel a synergy amongst ourselves and in our sound. Our repertoire is leaning more gospel than in the past, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Using those songs came in handy when Chuck asked the rest of us to sing during a service he was preaching for as a ‘fill-in Pastor’ at the Ripon Free Methodist Church. It is always a blessing to share our song with folks of faith.



Chuck was also asked to officiate the service for a friend’s son-in-law’s funeral service in Elk Grove. Kevin was a man of faith and mirth, and he enjoyed Gospel Quartet music. As we had been working up “I’ll Fly Away,” the request for the song to be sung during the service was able to be filled by us.



After our performance for the biggest game of the UOP Men's Basketball Season against BYU, we received options for a couple more games – looking forward to our return February 2 against the Pepperdine Waves. This starts a number of performances, culminating with the GVC Cherry Pie show with Royal Flush February 25.



We have our first official gig on Feb 11th at a church Valentine's dinner dance, and we have registered for both the March 11 Novice Quartet festival and the Novice category of the FWD spring contest. (Joe Hunt has graciously stepped in for Dave Harmon who will be in Mexico March 11.) And we all have way too much fun practicing!





## 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 board meeting nights)

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

See calendar for up-to-date information:

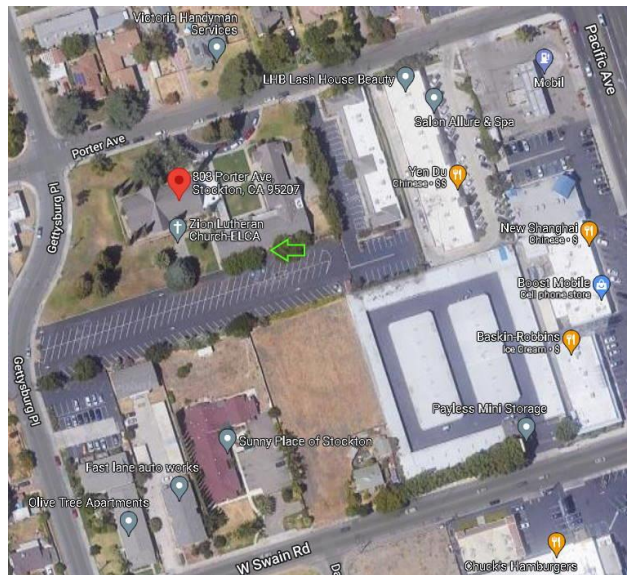
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

### 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](mailto:Info@StocktonPortsmen.org)
- Phone (209) 881-SING (7464)

### **\*\*SAVE THE DATE\*\***

- 3/4 2023 Nor Cal Novice Competition  
(St. Peter Lutheran Church - Lodi, CA)
- 4/15 2023 NorCal Divisions Convention  
(Brunelle Performing Arts Center – Davis, CA)  
[Click to go to link](#)
- 5/6 2023 Stockton Portsmen Spring Show  
(Zion Lutheran Church - Stockton, CA)
- 7/2-7/9 2023 International Convention (Louisville, Kentucky)
- 10/12 2023 FWD Fall Convention (Gilbert, AZ)

### **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/>