



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsman

May 2023 - Issue #46



President's Message:

By Al Wolter



THE VIEW FROM THE HELM

AFTER ACTION REPORTS – ISSUE 17

To some, this may be a strange title for the President's Message in a Barbershop Chapter Newsletter, but those of you who have been reading my "Views form the Helm" will likely get that I am talking about our recent visit to Davis and the Combined NorCal Divisions Convention and Contests.

While there is no violence and bloodshed associated with this event, anyone who doesn't believe that there is a bit of a conflict going on here lives under a rock. Contraire, there are lots of "one-up-man-ship" conflicts happening all at once. Rivalries between Divisions, Chapters, friends, and acquaintances abound as we gather to see who is better now.

While it is great to see folks from other Chapters, quartets, divisions, and the like, most of us would like to show off how we have improved and how we are better than you. I know of no quartet or chorus that hasn't waited with bated breath for the announcements and acted like school kids when their name was called as the winner. Just think of 'Never too Late' when they were named Northeastern Division Champs (did any of you question that?).

So, like any good campaign – it is time to review the action of our trip to Davis after the facts. First and foremost, we had good participation from our regular members, not relying on “non-regulars’ to bolster the ranks. We missed Joan, who was under the weather, and a couple of folks that have stopped being regulars with work and other obligations. Our core group of 15 singers and a director made a decent showing of ourselves. At the last couple of gatherings, I expressed how proud I was of the products we were putting out in our contest set. I think you can easily see the difference between the up-tune we have sung for years and the ballad we have just started singing in the past six weeks or so. Still, we earned solid numbers, and I will say that, personally, I think a little politics crept into the scoring (not necessarily in our favor).

This was the first time to compete for several of us, and I have heard nothing but positive remarks about those individual's experiences. That is good to hear. I have become a bit jaded about contests over the years. My quartet didn't compete, and it was easy for me to explain away as we really could not see a benefit to us. Many will say that is a bit of a selfish attitude, but one needs to do things for a purpose. On the other hand, there were lots of potential positives for both “Three Lads & Alas!” and “Royal Flush,” and I am proud to say that they received most if not all of them. Can truly say that both represented the Chapter very well and still have lots of promise for the future.

One of the benefits(?) of Contests is the Evaluation Session, where the competitor hears from the Judges on what they say they observed and how one can improve in the future. That question mark is not a typo, for me these can be good, bad, or indifferent – giving good, bad or oft-times conflicting information. The Chorus had a good session on performance, with some actionable advice. “Three Lads and ALAS!” session was also very helpful, in my mind as an observer. “Royal Flush” got the indifferent bordering on bad – I have some ideas on why that might be, but as they won't help this discussion or their outlook, I'll keep them to myself.

The key to all these evaluations is to pick out the things that hit home with the potential of improving and leave the ones that don't behind. I think we should use the "sing to someone" focus, and I thought I did – till I realized I didn't enough. Finding the collective 'someone' for a quartet and/or the chorus may be easier for some songs than for others, and maintaining the emotional focus each time its sung may be very hard. The more you do it, the less it becomes work and is just how you sing.

So, the bottom line of this review is that we had a good outing, while we didn't break the 70-score barrier, we are knocking on the door. One of the things that may help us is in gaining numbers, but as I said earlier – very proud that this was us, no 'ringers.' We came away with as the Northeast AA Championship, "Three Lads and Alas!" are the Northeast Novice Champions. Our Show will feature not only these Champions, but also the Northeast Senior Quartet Champions, Claim Jumpers, and the Northeast Quartet Champions "Never Too Late." These facts won't necessarily bring folks to come see us, but it shouldn't have driven them away. Hoping you sold tickets with this news.

Musical Director's Message:

By Bill Litz

It's exciting to present the **Portsmen's 66th Annual Show** this month – **Sentimental Journey**. I'm not sure how that number works out with COVID having shut us down, our last show being in 2019 (since we have done more than one show some years, maybe the count is still good). But it does get us back to thinking about performance. Fortunately, we just had the pleasure of competing (and winning the Plateau AA trophy) in the Far Western Northeast Division competition a couple weeks ago to whet our appetite for being on stage.

We've spent three years singing in a circle for each other instead of communicating to an audience. That has given us a chance to work on being better singers and learning more about the barbershop style. With our sound, being the best that the *Portsmen* have ever produced, it makes it easier for us to be performers. I think in the past, we have been concerned going on stage, that our product wasn't good enough.

I went to the **Bay Area Harmony Sweepstakes A Cappella Festival** over the weekend (sadly there were NO barbershop groups). There were many musical moments to enjoy. It's remarkable how many styles and textures the Acapella genre encompasses. As we have The Barbershop Harmony Society (BHS) for barbershop singers, The Contemporary A Cappella Society (CASA) exists to create a learning environment about A Cappella music and create a place for competition.

The most noticeable thing in the competition is that the harmony of the groups isn't what we are used to in the barbershop world. There is usually a melody singer, a bass singer and vocal percussionist backed by singers doing harmony. Getting the balance of each part to be right is an art in and of itself. As the groups add more singers to do harmonies and counter rhythms, the sound can get overwhelming. For a group to be good, each person needs to know when to bring out their part when it's the focus and how to get out of the way when they are not.

Acapella performers have the same problems we barbershoppers have as performers – that is to be visually appealing and genuine. Selection of what to wear and how to move can add to or distract from the quality of the performance.

The Acapella support community is probably just as nice to its people as our BHS community is to us. We are ALL amateurs and give each other leeway and encouragement to perform.

As I observed the contest, I was reminded at how singing barbershop is a pretty easy and safe way to approach Acapella music.

- Configuration of the Group
 - BHS singers fit into 4 voicings – Tenor, Lead (Melody), Baritone and Bass singers
 - Quartets or Choruses that can range from 10 to 150+ singers
 - ❖ CASA – Lead (Melody), Harmony, Bass and Vocal Percussion (Beat box) singers
 - Small groups from 5 to 15 singers although there are also some Acapella choruses
- Arrangements
 - BHS has many arrangements for different skill levels and high-quality arrangers that make it easy to get started in a group. There is also a segment of singers that *woodshed* arrangements (making them up spontaneously).
 - ❖ CASA – most groups have a unique set of voices so they come up with their own arrangements – this can make for chords structures and voicings that can be great or a train wreck. And as groups incorporate jazz harmonies, the knowledge and ear of each singer can make or break the group's appeal.
- Song Selection

- BHS being officially *The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.* does in fact have mostly songs that are older but there are also more contemporary arrangements. The style is better on songs that have a singable melody that has a more complex chord progression than many contemporary, *one chord* songs.
- ❖ CASA – The world is your oyster, but since most groups are emulating “a band”, the lead singer, the bass singer and beat boxer carry most of the musical load. The ability of the harmony singers to create a believable and entertaining backup for the lead singer opens the door for creativity.
- Amplification
 - BHS -Usually a couple mics can handle every situation and there isn't a skill level in using them except for *being afraid to step up to the mic*. I love that as barbershoppers we can step out and sing anywhere, anytime.
 - ❖ CASA – Every voice needs to be mic'd and balanced. So that can be a mixer with 15 wireless mics set up with very special considerations for the Bass and Beat Boxer. I wonder how groups practice and how they sound unmic'd.
- Costuming
 - BHS – Even though the stereotypical attire for a barbershop quartet would include a striped vest and straw hats, that is no longer the norm. Usually, the attire for quartets and choruses is something dressy that matches or a costume that fits into a dramatic presentation of the song.
 - ❖ CASA – Most groups I've seen are trying to just look like normal people on stage. Sometimes they match but it seems like the attire isn't as much of a concern, which can lead to the lack of concern turning into a distraction.
- Choreography
 - BHS – Movement is either non-existent or over the top. Top level choruses create dramas in their contest packages that can make performances awe inspiring. Since most choruses perform on risers, that limits the movement, but it can also give a height that allows for movement that gets lost on a flat stage. Some quartets add some dance or special moves to their performance but generally they are trying to simply tell the story of the song with authenticity.
 - ❖ CASA – Even though most performances are on a flat stage, the performers move around more, filling the stage with activity. With each performer being mic'd, cords used to be a concern (and might be in certain venues), but with groups using wireless setups, movement is less

restricted. But holding mics still has an effect on what movements can be done.

- Content Rating

- BHS prides itself on presenting *Family Friendly* material. Even though that might be a limitation, I believe that many subjects can be handled with ingenuity. It sometimes takes effort to rein in material that might be in bad taste, but I see that as a bonus.
- ❖ CASA – Be prepared for anything. As in many current theatrical productions, modern Acapella groups may do material that IS NOT G rated or may dress more provocatively. Different events and locations will accommodate diverse styles.

Both Barbershop and Acapella genres can spawn good or bad performances. Different groups will be better at communicating with the audience in either style. But I believe that BHS has a more structured environment to help ANY singer have a good musical experience.

I love performing with you under the Barbershop Style umbrella. As we push our performances to be more visually appealing and as we select more music that audiences can identify with, we can draw more people in to grow as an entertainment producing organization while increasing our personal skills and enjoyment.

Portsmen go to Paris! **(Nancy Hennefer)**

In case you haven't heard, the chorus has been invited to sing at the 80th Anniversary of the Invasion of Normandy Beach in France, summer of 2024. The first steps will soon begin, including plans for fundraising and spreading the news to our communities! Our hope is to have a full complement of singers along with the company of other family and friends to join us. Stay "tuned"!

QUARTET MUSTER

Tune Struck

The Ripon First Responders Appreciation Day was more than just an opportunity to sing the National Anthem. We sang a little before we walked from the Police Station to the Fire Station, stopping along the way to sing a song for the residents of the Senior Living Center along the route. There is something to be said about sharing songs with folks that appreciate the art of giving of one's self.



The next Monday, we shared a few more songs with the Committee that put on the event, including the Mayor of Ripon. They asked us to get a little taste of what we do as they were busy working and had received several good comments.

Our last scheduled gig for the month was for the Fairmont Seventh Day Adventist Women Missionary Group's Annual Ladies Tea. This would be the first full 20 minute 'performance' we have done in our new configuration. The best part, aside from the full house, was the interaction with the crowd and the proper responses to the 'shtick'. Was a real treat to sing for such an appreciative crowd, which even asked for an encore.



It feels really good to be getting back to singing for folks. We are looking forward to a performance or two in May besides the Stockton show.

Lastly, we want to extend our congratulations to Royal Flush and Three Lads & Alas! for their excellent showing at the Northeast Division Quartet Contest. It is both a blessing and a bit scary that you are as good as you are. Here is to years of making each other be better quartets.

THREE
LEADS
and...
ALAS!




Kitty Harmon (Tenor), Dave Harmon (Baritone),
Alex Bernal (Bass) & Tom Harmon (Lead)

We're over the moon about our unexpected novice win. Rehearsing for the show, brainstorming about possible gigs, and enjoying our musical friendship.

Royal Flush



Stephanie Thurman (Tenor), Chuck Thurman (Lead),
Paul Grant (Bass) & Nancy Hennefer (Baritone)

Royal Flush continues to tighten up our sound with Monday night rehearsals. A successful performance in Davis gave us the needed boost to keep moving forward with more difficult songs and sounds. Due to possible relocations and job searches, the future of Royal Flush was uncertain, but we are happy to report, is intact for now and we're already looking ahead to the holiday season and hoping for some Anthem sings along the way.

FWD 2023 NorCal Division Convention Pictures



VLQ
with special guest Jordan Litz!





Show Rehearsal Night with Chuck Roots



Celebrations

May Birthdays

Dave Harmon 5/20

THE STOCKTON PORTSMEN CHORUS
PROUDLY PRESENTS OUR
66TH ANNUAL SHOW

"SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

A MUSICAL RETURN TO WHAT ONCE WAS

MAY 6TH @ 2:30PM

Special Guests:

"NEVER TOO LATE"

TICKETS: \$20 GENERAL ADMISSION
\$15 YOUTH/SENIORS

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
808 W. PORTER AVE
STOCKTON, CA 95207

www.stocktonportsmen.org



*Presents The Annual Bean Feed
A Somewhat Serious Quartet Contest*

Wednesday, June, 14th 6pm

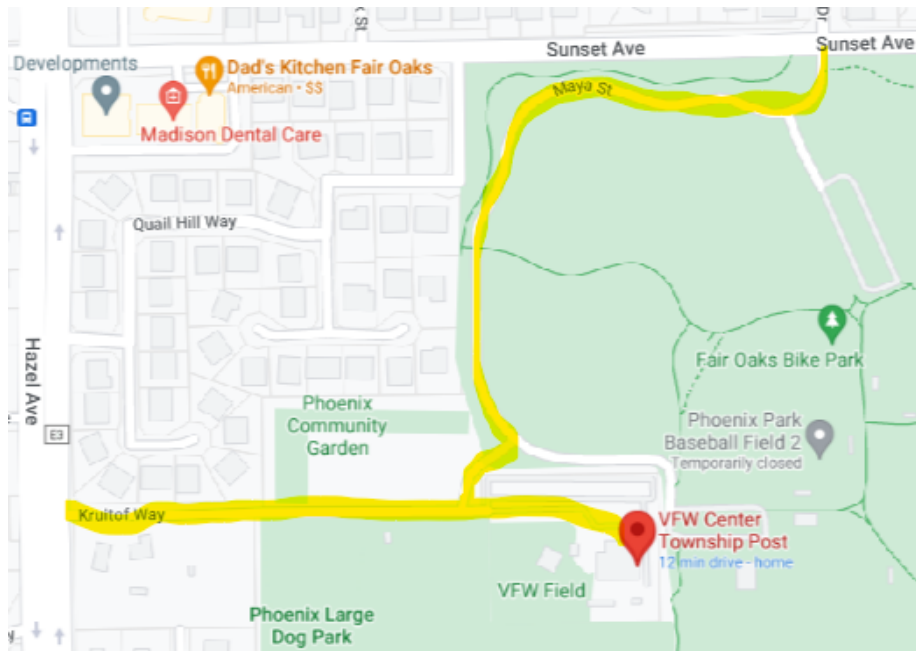
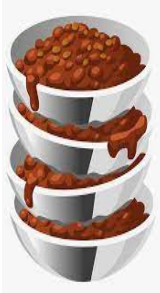
At The VFW in Fair Oaks

8990 Kruitof Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Celebrating Over 30 Years of

Bean Feeds and Barbershop Quartet Contests

Tickets are \$10.00 at the door



Folsom Harmony is a non-profit Organization



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:

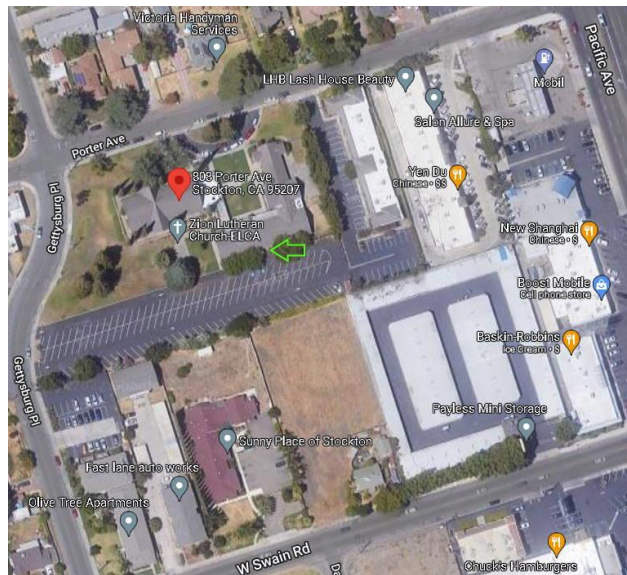
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

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 Road, 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****

- 5/6 2023 Stockton Portsmen Spring Show
- 5/29 Memorial Day at Cherokee Memorial (Lodi, CA)
- 6/4 Friend of the Fox Cinema Classis showing Strategic Air Command
- 7/2-7/9 2023 International Convention (Louisville, Kentucky)
- 7/3 Celebrate America Hutchins Street Square (Lodi, CA) (5pm-7pm)
- 10/12 2023 FWD Fall Convention (Gilbert, AZ)
- 10/20-10/22 Harmony Camp 2023 (Sly Park) Teaching Quartet - Vocalocity

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/>