



# The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen  
September/October 2021 - Issue #29

## **President's Message: By Nancy Hennefer**

One year ago, I was holding out hope that our chorus would jump right back into our "routine;" full sounding rehearsals, sing outs, looking ahead to competition, holiday songs..... Weeks turned into months, and months into a solid year plus. As we struggled to get back up and running, I wondered if we could weather the CoVid storm. While we did lose a few members through life/death circumstances, we slowly began to rise again. Rehearsals were moved to an earlier time and outdoors. Bill and Sue helped keep CoVid protocols in place. We welcomed back Steve and Roberta. Alan and Brad joined us as valuable new members of our Portsmen family. While my term as your President did not play out exactly as planned (yes, I am still thinking outside the box with ideas for the chorus), I was able to represent us at District Zoom Meetings and other correspondence, making sure that the "big boys" knew we were still kicking! I was honored to be your first female President (albeit sort of lame duck) and look forward to leadership by our new slate of officers. I am leaving one President role to become the new President of the Lodi Grape Festival Executive Board and know that incoming Pres. Al will step up. Our new officers deserve all of our help (and thanks).... so we ALL need to step up. So.... cheers to a new season, some new songs (hopefully) and some performances! Because it's great to be a Barbershopper.....

Sending Love Notes,

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## **Musical Director's Message:**

### **By Bill Litz**

This month's inspiration comes from my foray into philosophy - be very afraid. Reading *The Socrates Express* has challenged me to look at many things in new ways. One of the chapters suggests considering what attributes make a good father.... what I consider that to be is a whole different conversation. But considering what I consider *success* is necessary to drive the things I do to achieve *success*. We each probably have different ideas on what it is to be a good singer or **Portsmen** member.

Instead of reading what others think a good singer is, take some time to define what being a good singer means to you. Too often we approach things in life from the standpoint of what makes us feel we fail at something. What are the things that make you feel like a successful singer and not an imposter? Once you have those things in mind, your actions will gravitate toward things that support that success.

My list of things could be very different from the ones that drive you, but I'd like to share mine with you as I go through the inspection process myself. Some things are skill based that take practice to acquire. Other things come from a mindset that is open to experiencing joyful moments. Some items can be approached from the negative side – even thinking about things I have struggles with can make me feel like giving up. Before giving up, it's important to celebrate all the other things that are successes. Then find ways to overcome what you feel are shortcomings.

- **Singing in tune**

I like to think that singing in tune is something I do well, but there are many times that I realize I am the one out of tune. Record Yourself, use tuning apps, and the ears of those around you to help you learn to sing in tune.

- **Remembering the words and notes of songs**

When I first started barbershop, I had a hard time memorizing. Singing without music in my hand was very helpful in developing memorization techniques. Write Lyrics. Visualize contextual things about the song. Practice reading words without music. Practice singing your part without words. Duet to find special moments that you want to experience every time you sing a phrase.

- **Understanding and incorporating different musical styles**

I've listened to a lot of different music in my life. Being a music major in college probably helps me to be aware of different styles, but everyone has an ear, and with some thought, can identify tempos, rhythms and harmonic elements that make different type of songs work. Sometimes we can even use those skills to do songs in a different style than the original. Listen to different styles and identify what is special about them. Try different styles.

- **Feeling a rhythm**

Feeling "in the pocket" rhythmically is an amazing thing. Count rhythmic patterns. Clap different rhythms. Feel how words/lyrics create rhythmic sounds. Be aware of "on the beat" and "off the beat" rhythms.

- **Using dynamics and inflections**

It's easy to get caught up in only the notes and words. But louds and softs of different phrases, and even the texture of a phrase from beginning to end, is what turns notes and words into artistry. Give important words extra weight. Use different volume levels for repeating phrases to give a reason for the repeat.

- **Singing different parts and ranges**

I sing lead most of the time, so I don't work particularly high or low notes very often. Practice singing songs and exercises that find your highest and lowest notes. Sing different parts to use different parts of your range and different parts of your brain. Sing in different keys, lower and higher than the written music to find your sweet spot. It's thrilling to hold that, high, low or long note that you didn't think you could.

- **Singing the right vowel**

We often talk about "*target vowels*" in barbershop and Acapella singing. In English there are 24 different vowel sounds – many classically trained singers limit the number of vowels which can change the sound of a word. Use vowel sounds that are more conversational, unless there is a special reason, like trying to create an accent. Acapella singing produces it's best sound on vowels, and an ensemble sounds best when vowels match. Practice singing different vowels and synchronizing the words you are singing with your group.

- **Generating a beautiful sound**

This is my personal nemesis. There are as many acceptable sounds as there are singers. It's important to sing with your best tone and resonance. Some groups will try to make everyone sing the same. There is some merit in trying to emulate a singer that you admire, but it is important to find your voice and learn to love it. Make sure that you are using your instrument correctly – posture, breathing, breath support, being relaxed, mouth shape and even smile all influence the sound you create. Only then can you make a small adjustment to blend with other singers.

- **Reading music**

Reading music well gives you the opportunity to try different songs and arrangements than you can think up on your own. There are *MANY* singers that rely on learning by listening to others or making up a part that sounds good to them. Some of those people learn music very quickly but being able to sightread opens up a world of written music to explore. Learn the language – note values, pitches, key signatures, time signatures, dynamic markings. Identify intervals – melodic intervals to be able to read musical lines – harmonic intervals to be able to recognize and tune chords. Not reading can paralyze your ability to try even the simplest song or know what note you should start on.

- **Communicating to others**

Being able to make a statement musically, with or without words, is the ultimate goal. Having a successful performance that is pleasing to the ear, visually entertaining, and emotion inducing is what I want most. Taking the audience on a journey through musical performance and seeing their reaction or understanding of what you are communicating is the litmus test of all the preparation to make music. And music is so temporary. It needs to be created artistically over and over since the sound dissipates into the air. Learn to recreate those special moments – consistency in the performance is a wonderful achievement.

- **Collaborating with others**

Making harmonic music takes more than one person. It's important to appreciate what each person brings to the musical party. Compliment them for it. Unselfishly bring your best. Use each other's ideas to make better music. Share opinions. Perform for each other. Laugh together. Working seamlessly together is how you can be free to create beautiful, sincere harmonization.

I hope that my personal inspection helps you feel inclined to looking inside yourself – to find the elements where you feel success. Revel in the things you already do well and cherish the moments when they are happening. For the things that you feel weak about, maybe even terrified: seek out knowledge and others to help you; then practice, making them another element that you can feel successful about.

Singing in a chorus, like the Portsmen or in a quartet is the perfect place to allow yourself to become a good singer.

- Barbershop harmony is an easy way to learn music
- You are among friends that will support you
- You can start at any level and improve
- You can be invisible (are we ever invisible)
- You can have solo moments when you feel you are ready
- You can experience ways to perform

Take advantage of the opportunities the Portsmen create. Dare to quartet with other Portsmen to strengthen your singing. Be the singer you want to be.

## **Incoming 2022 Board of Directors:**

The votes are in and approved! The following members are your 2022 Stockton Portsmen Board of Directors. Thank you everyone for your willingness to serve.

President	Al Wolter
Secretary	Steve Yund
Treasurer	Al Farnum
VP: Membership/Chapter Development	Dave Harmon
VP: Marketing & PR	Brad Neiman
VP: Music & Performance	Sue Atkins
Board Member	Bob Yater
Board Member	Joan Ray
Immediate Past President	Nancy Hennefer

# "I MISSED AGAIN"

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September/October Chapter Development  
Al Wolter

*Well it feels like something you want so bad.  
Then you think you've got it, but it's something you already had.*

This month's title snippet is from the song **Phil Collins** made popular in 1981. As I am sure you have noted, I like to use a song for a theme (sometimes the theme is first and sometimes it's the song). This month it's a little of both.

The first thing that put me into thinking about missing is the fact that we missed our Chapter picnic again for the second year. This year was due to the bad air and high daytime temperatures. This led to our needing to donate chicken and burger patties to the **Gospel Rescue Mission**. We also had to place a tub of plates and serving ware upstairs at Zion. I state this so we don't forget and buy more next year (oh and there is some in the metal cabinet too).

Another thing that was missed was the free-will donation for the **Harmony Camp**. In the past we have collected several hundred dollars to help offset the cost for this weekend of harmony for young men in Sly Park. My hope is that we use the occasion of the *Annual Chapter Meeting* and elections to collect some donations for this year's **Camp**.

Now it would not surprise me that more than one of you might ask, why. What do we get out of it? Well did you get the September/October Harmonizer? The article on page 9 about The Songwriters Project features the product of our support for **Camp**. **Dan Rohvit** grew up in Manteca, was a recipient of our support for camp, and has gone on to first intern at **Society Headquarters** in Nashville and now teaches music and directs a chorus, besides being part of this project.

Before I miss the opportunity, I want to review the *Annual Chapter Meeting* and all that entails. First, as a reminder, we are a fraternal organization, registered with both the **Society** and the **California Secretary of State**. As such, we have a Board of Directors that administratively lead the Chapter as per our Chapter By-Laws. We elect our Board of Directors each year (or at least we are supposed to): President; Vice Presidents of Music, Membership, & Marketing; and two Members at Large (the last President serves as the immediate Past President to round out the Board).

The Chapter President is responsible to appoint a Nominating Committee, which is then tasked with presenting a slate of nominees to fill these positions. This slate is presented to the Chapter Membership two weeks before the designated date of the Annual Meeting. This gives Chapter members a week to consider the slated nominees and get the consent of individuals they believe would do a better job for position. The following week, nominations from the floor are able to be made.

Another week to digest all these nominees and on the Annual Chapter meeting the election is held. Should there be no opposed positions, a motion to accept the presented slate that is duly seconded can be approved by a voice vote. Should there be a contested position, a voice vote or ballot vote can be requested. Once the positions are determined, the Chapter Secretary needs to update the Society Members Only Site before October 15<sup>th</sup>, so that all the proper notification and educational opportunities are delivered to the new office holders. Seems rather simple, but it seems that folks often get confused and things are sometimes missed. I do hope that all of our inactive members have had the Annual Chapter Meeting, set for September 28, on their calendars and attend to indicate their opinions.

This gives me another item to the 'missed again' theme – and that would be the Installation Dinner. For those of you that are new to us, each year we have a Social Event where the incoming Officers are installed – normally in January. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to gather with our partners, have a meal, and recognize not only those that will lead us for the upcoming year but also those that have done good things during the past year. Next month, I will talk a bit about some of the ways folks are thusly recognized.

Let's hope that we won't be missing anything else as we go forward.

## "HONOR AND HARMONY"

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*October Chapter Development*  
*Al Wolter*

***... we're all human so there's no need to be taking it,  
With some honor and harmony we'll surely be making it***

This month's title snippet is from a [G. Love & Special Sauce](#) song I found on the internet, which describes my theme to a "Tee". In my last article, I alluded to a more detailed discussion of the Installation & Awards Dinner. While it may take me a while, I do hope follow through on my intents.

The Installation and Awards Dinner gives the Chapter the opportunity to look both forward with the new Board Members being officially 'sworn in,' but also to look back at the accomplishments during the past year.

The most prestigious award is presented to the ***Barbershopper of the Year*** – that Chapter member who did the most for the Chapter, as determined by past recipients. The BOTY receives a certificate and a lapel pin. A list of current BOTYs is on the Web page.

The next in line is the President's Award – what has been deemed the ***Soaring Eagle Award***. This award was created by a Past President when the BOTY recipients selected someone that was not their choice. As another was equally deserving, this was presented. It has been presented ever since. You can find the list of Soaring Eagles with the BOTYs.

You will also find a list of ATOYs, ***Associate of the Year***. Before the Society accepted women as full members, they were Associate members. As many provided great assistance to the Chapter, it was proper to recognize them. They are now eligible for the BOTY, so the AOTY has been retired.

Additionally, each Vice President can (and in my opinion, should) recognize members that contributed to the Chapter within their area of responsibility, things like the '***Rookie of the Year***,' the '***Highest Ticket Seller***,' '***Most Ads Sold***,' and '***Show Set Constrictor***.' These don't have to be actual Chapter members either, we have recognized several non-members over the years.

The last award I would like to highlight is the PON – the ***Person of Note***! This recognition is given to the individual who is helpful in bringing a new member into the Society. This can be from a personal invite, or being the person that provides transportation, or the one mentors them and makes them feel comfortable in joining. Not every new member has a sponsor that gets a PON, but they should.

## MEMBER UPDATES

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One of the things that most of us have missed over the past year and a half is seeing and connecting with each other. Therefore, it has been a joy to be back meeting and singing with the 10 to 14 regular attendees each Tuesday.

We have a total membership of 28, with eight of them being dual members of at least one other chorus.

As far as I know, today September 13, 2021, all are in good health, and I have talked to most over the course of the year.

# TUNE STRUCK QUARTET

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When a foursome has been together for a couple of years, they become more than just a singing group – they are family. So when Greg had a birthday on a rehearsal night and there was nothing previously planned, we just had to have a party. Oh, we sang a bit, but having our partners with us was a great way to celebrate.



The drought of actual rehearsals does continue, with Bill heading to Texas to see his son Jordan star in the traveling production of *“Wicked!”* But having been together for a while means that we can pick-up without a lot of effort, which is a good thing as we finally were able to sing for a lady who has been trying to hire us for a couple of months. Synthia received a Singing Valentines a number of years ago and just knew it was time to be serenaded again. Her Mother-in-Law was celebrating her 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday and what better way than with a quartet performance.



After we sang for Joyce, three of us took the chance to grab a bite to eat at Pizza Parlor in the neighborhood. Kind of a kismet thing as the Stockton Ports texted with an emergency Anthem Sing request – the scheduled performer had to cancel. Since three of us were together, it was quick to determine that two of us were good; Bill had tickets to ***“Something Rotten”*** at **Stockton Civic Theatre**, and to agree on a possible substitute. The longest wait was for Bob to get home to confirm he was good to go. A text to **Steve Yund** and we were set. This was Steve’s first trip to Banner Island Ballpark and the first time in a long time to sing the Anthem for the Ports (yeah, that means it was at Billy Hebert Field).



Last update talked about having another opportunity to sing the Anthem for the Ports game and I would share a photo (the photo from the Victory Garden Groundbreaking was posted), so this is us on the big screen.



## Weekly Chapter Meetings:

**\*We are currently meeting outside in the courtyard without masks.\***

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

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

See calendar for up-to-date information:

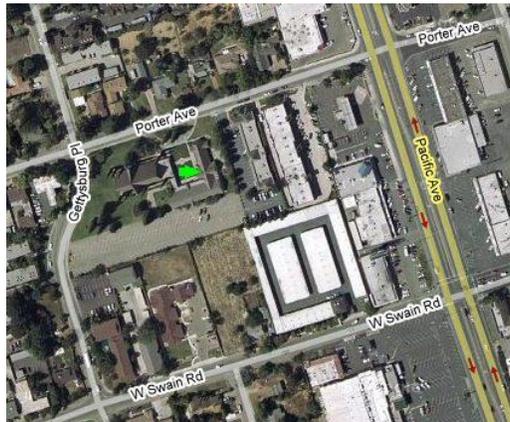
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsman Calendar](#)

**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](mailto: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

### **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/>