



# The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsman

January 2026 - Issue #77



"Upwrap the Harmony" Holiday Show

## The View from the Helm

BACK ON THE BRIDGE - ISSUE 26-01



Well, welcome to the new year. I was not expecting to be needing to write a President's Message for some time, if ever.

Over the past years of my 'Views from the Helm,' I tried to share my experience and prepare you, my fellow Portsman, to move into the leadership of the Chapter. I have no clue if it has helped any of you in that regard.

While my leadership style shouldn't change this year, my focus of this year's "Helms" may be less on education & motivation and more on accountability. Without trying to throw anyone under the bus, some illumination of missed opportunities may help us move forward.

Don't let this alarm anyone, we, the Portsmen, are becoming the "Go To" Chapter of Nor Cal East.

As this is my look forward to 2026, let's review what currently exists on our plate. First, we have fun and honor. While we have yet (as of this writing) decided how we are going to treat ourselves, January 13 will be our Officer Installation and Awards Dinner in the Barrel Room of the Grape Festival Grounds. Remember that this is an opportunity to share our hobby with our immediate family. We spend a lot of time away from them, but without their support we wouldn't be able to do half of the stuff we do.

Even as we finalize the details for the dinner, we need to start working on scheduling the quartets for delivering Singing Valentines. With Valentines Day falling on Saturday, there are opportunities for deliveries on Friday. One of my views about sales of our 'services' is that more of us will be encouraged when we feel comfortable with the product we are selling. Knowing that the quartets that will be delivering are top-notch will help more of us sell valentines. The fact that the two active quartets share a Lead will make things difficult, but it gives some of you an opportunity to step up. So now is the time to determine what your personal availability could be and be ready to step up.

After that, we are hosting the Novice Quartet Contest again at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Lodi the next Saturday 2/21. One of the good things about this date is it is after Valentines, so if your foursome really sounded good, you can try to claim the 2026 Novice Crown (well plaque). If you are not competing, or even if you are, we will need your help with moving quartets to the stage, taking money for audience, etc.

Right after that, we are the hosts of the real contest, the Spring District Convention and Preliminary International Quartet Qualifier Contest in conjunction with the Northern California Division Contests. This will require the help of all of us and some or our family, as well as folks from other Chapters. It will be held at McNair High School and is a bit of a feather for our hat. Yes, I believe we will be competing in the Chorus Contest, be a pretty sweet thing if we won the Division, we CAN do that.

April 25<sup>th</sup> will be our Annual Show, our 69<sup>th</sup>, Stanta's Escape Plan. I hope to be sending out a draft of the script to everyone soon. This show will tax our minds a bit as we will be using parody words to a number of tunes, we know, bringing a couple of songs out of retirement, as well as a new song or two.

While not on the calendar yet, I expect we will be singing for Memorial Day in May and the Celebrate America Event before July 4 (likely Friday July 3).

That's a fairly full and active six-plus months. And yet, the biggest deal is the potential trip to Hawaii and the District Fall Convention 10/6-10/11. While the Convention itself will be just the weekend as usual, with the Pan-Pacific Music Festival and the vocational aspect of the Islands, think most of us that will go will be going for a week at least.

One of our goals should be doing everything that we can to assist everyone in joining us. I know that Bill and Sue will be there, as Sue will need to attend as District VP for the Northeastern Division.

This may seem to some to be a daunting list, but other than hosting the Prelims, this is really our normal schedule. Going to Hawaii should be easier than going to France, so let's get to it.



### **January Birthday Celebrations**

**Chuck Thurman – 1/5**  
**Brad Nieman – 1/7**  
**Bob Wilson – 1/12**  
**Stephanie Thurman – 1/18**  
**Joan Ray – 1/22**

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

**By Bill Litz**

What happens when the words are just a little different than you remember?

When the album you've listened to for years has a melodic twist that doesn't match the arrangement we're singing together or when our arrangement is the one with the twist?

What about transitions, key changes, tags, and pickups that don't live in your muscle memory yet?

Those moments are where growth actually happens.

It's natural for our brains to reach for what's familiar. When something feels "off," our instinct is often to default to the version we know best, the old lyric, the expected note, the comfortable entrance. That's not a flaw; it's how learning works. Automatic responses are built from repetition.

The challenge (and the opportunity) is learning how to replace an old automatic response with a new one.

That starts with awareness. Noticing why something feels hard instead of pushing through it on autopilot. Slowing down long enough to identify the change: Where exactly is the difference? What's the new choice I need to make here?

Next comes intention. Singing the change on purpose even if it feels awkward at first. Repeating it correctly, not just often. Giving your brain and body clear information about what the new habit is supposed to be.

And finally, patience. New automatic responses don't appear overnight. They're built the same way the old ones were with focused repetition, reinforcement, and time. The moment something stops requiring conscious effort is the moment it's become yours.

So, if you find yourself thinking, "This part just doesn't come naturally," that's not a setback it's a sign you're standing at the edge of growth.

Because what comes easy today was once something you had to think about. And what feels unfamiliar now can, with the right work, become your next automatic response.

Let's keep asking the question — and doing the work that turns intention into instinct.



# Festival of Trees





## Friends of the Fox



Thanks to Richard Yates (Capture Culture Films) for these photos!  
[Click link to find out more about Capture Culture Films](#)



*Thanks! to all the Quartets that performed on  
our Holiday Show "Unwrap the Harmony"*

## *Bass Wanted*

*Chuck, Stephanie, Willys & Nance*





# *Hot Mess Express*

## *Megan, Julie, Diane & Pam*





# *Four Heaven's Sake*

## *A Barbershop Quartet*

*John Hunt*

*Steve Lund*

*Dave Harmon*

*Willys Nitschke*

UPDATE: 12-29-25



*Four Heaven's Sake* had a bit of a hiatus from performances in November. But we have had many opportunities to sing and share our harmonizing hobby to finish out the calendar year. First, we sang in Carmichael on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at Northridge Country Club for the Well's Fargo Retirees Holiday Luncheon.

Willys, our bass, is a member of this group. He and Dave, our baritone performed for them last year with *Three Lads and a Lass* and wanted more barbershop harmony. We sang a mix of barbershop classics and holiday songs. There was a notable ninetieth birthday that we helped to celebrate as well. Wonderful reception and great prime rib as a reward for a job well done.





Then, on the 4<sup>th</sup> we serenaded Josie to celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. She, her friends, family and Bingo-buddies enjoyed the show in the Garden Oaks House at O'Connor Woods.

We sang a few songs as a pop-out quartet at the Festival of Trees on the 6<sup>th</sup> getting a chance to practice some of the songs we were learning for the Holiday show the following Saturday.

4HSQ participated in the Stockton Portsmen's *Unwrap the Harmony* Holiday Show at Zion Lutheran Church as a pop-out quartet. Finally getting a bit more comfortable performing in front of other people and receiving comments of appreciation.

Nance Henefer, our Chapter's presidential baritone, joined us for a mixed Holiday/Birthday celebration at Heritage Oaks Winery on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Nance is friends with the birthday boy, Tom and his wife Carmella. So, Dave graciously stepped aside for Nance to do a fine job holding up the rest of us.



At the Chorus' singouts at both The Oaks retirement community on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the Philomathean Club on the 19<sup>th</sup>, we had a chance to pop-out and share our Christmas set of *Silver Bells*, *Frosty the Snowman*, and *Mary, Did You Know*. We truly came to embrace the power of the message of Mary's life through that song! What an incredible privilege to be able to share our voices and spread some Holiday cheer!

Thanks for your support! We wish you and your loved ones joy and peace this new year ... *Four Heaven's Sake!*

# Tune Struck

December! The month of TRUE love, of CHEER, Childlike ENTHUSIASM and EXCITEMENT, and more importantly to Tune Struck Quartet, a period of time to share our favorite Holiday Songs.

Yet, our first performance, while giving us an opportunity to sing some of those songs, was to sing our National Anthem! It is an honor to be asked by the **Stockton Kings** to sing the **Star-Spangled Banner** to start a game. They like to do their sound and song length check right before doors open, so it gave us a good amount of time to sing some other things too. It did seem that the Grinch enjoyed our version of his song.





The first weekend of December has always been special to us. Even before we were a quartet, the Festival of Trees was an event that the core of Tune Struck looked forward to our participation with the Portsmen. Being able to step out and share a song and demonstrate the quartet sound is always a treat.



We also helped support the chorus at the **Friends of the Fox** pre-movie sing; I am sure there will be photos from there elsewhere in this edition.

Next up for us was a surprise (for both us and the recipient) Birthday-gram. Daniel's wife knew that his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday needed something special and as a busy banker at Farmers & Merchants Lodi, he was had to pin down and quick to find out surprises. Her last-minute call to the Portsmen line got us to F&M at 9 AM and a complete surprise.





That night we entertained the arriving guests for our local 'celebrated developer, rancher, farmer, winegrower, Western art collector, humanitarian and champion carriage racer's' Christmas Party. It has been a while since we had a two-hour scheduled event, much like the Dillard's VIP Event. Being that the people paused and then went in, the 13 songs we repeated gave us more of a rehearsal for our upcoming appearance in the Portsmen Show. Their sculpture of Mark Twain was our true constant

audience, though the doormen that rotated though got to hear lots of repeats.

We are always glad to be featured on the Chapter Show, and as we unwrapped PLAYFULLNESS, we took it to heart (or did Bill and Sue just know what we were doing?). Having a spot for not only Version Four, but also Version Three S – Sue was a special treat.





Sometimes it works out that the founding members of this quartet truly make up the core of the chorus, the performance for the North Stockton Rotary was one of those times, with Bob holding down the Bass section solo. We don't currently have photographic evidence, but we still did fine. Afterwards, we sprinted over to Golden Bear Insurance Company & Wholesure Solutions Insurance Services offices to carol for Sue.





# Youth In Harmony: A Renewed Musical Focus

By Sue Atkins

As Vice President of Music & Performance, one of my responsibilities is to regularly step back and ask an important question: Are we investing our musical energy where it matters most, for today and for the future?

That reflection has led us to a renewed focus on Youth In Harmony.

While the Stockton Portsmen have not been actively engaged in Youth In Harmony programming in recent years, we are now intentionally refocusing our efforts on supporting young singers and reconnecting with school music programs in our community. This is not about “catching up” it’s about moving forward with purpose.

Youth In Harmony is a program supported by the Stockton Portsmen and the Barbershop Harmony Society, designed to introduce students to the joy, discipline, and teamwork of barbershop-style a cappella singing. From a musical standpoint, barbershop offers young singers something incredibly valuable: ear training, blend, balance, listening, and shared musical responsibility.

## **WHY THIS MATTERS MUSICALLY**

Quartet and ensemble singing teaches skills that directly strengthen any choir program: pitch awareness, vowel matching, musical independence, and confidence. Youth In Harmony allows us to share those skills in a way that supports educators rather than competing with existing school programs.

As we rebuild this effort, Youth In Harmony may include:

- School visits and barbershop demonstrations
- Coaching and clinics for student ensembles
- Invitations for students to attend open Portsmen rehearsals
- Encouragement and support for novice and student quartets
- Opportunities to observe live barbershop performance and evaluation

## **NOVICE QUARTET COMPETITION – FEBRUARY 21, 2026**

An important part of our renewed Youth In Harmony focus is encouraging singers to experience quartet singing. The Stockton Portsmen will host a Novice Quartet Competition on February 21, designed specifically for first-time and newer quartets.

This low-pressure, educational event emphasizes learning, teamwork, and growth. Quartets receive encouraging feedback aimed at helping singers build confidence and musical skills they can take back to their school or ensemble. Members are encouraged to attend and support our newest singers.

### **WHY NOW?**

The timing couldn't be better. In March 2026, the Stockton Portsmen will host the Far Western District Spring Convention, bringing top-level barbershop right into our own community.

### **Location:**

Ronald E. McNair High School  
Stockton, CA

### **Dates:**

March 19–21, 2026

This event will include Northern Division competitions, Spring Preliminaries, and educational sessions. From a music education standpoint, this is a tremendous opportunity for students to see what barbershop looks and sounds like at a high level—and to imagine themselves doing it.

### **HOW MEMBERS CAN SUPPORT THIS FOCUS**

This renewed Youth In Harmony effort will succeed because of member involvement, not perfection. You don't need to be a coach or clinician to contribute. Members can:

- Welcome young singers at rehearsals and events
- Help create a positive, encouraging musical environment
- Support Youth In Harmony and Novice Activities
- Be an advocate for barbershop whenever you talk about what we do

As VP of Music & Performance, I truly believe that strengthening Youth In Harmony strengthens our musical culture, our relevance in the community, and the future of this chorus.

Thank you for being part of a chorus that is willing to reflect, refocus, and grow. If you have any connections to schools, educators, or students, please share them. We would love your help opening doors.

## **Bring Harmony to Your Next Event**

### **Book the Stockton Portsmen or One of Our Quartets!**

**A mixed-voice a cappella chorus celebrating 70 years of harmony in the Central Valley.**

Looking to add warmth, charm, and polished harmony to your next event? Whether you're planning a lively celebration or a heartfelt ceremony, the Stockton Portsmen Chorus or one of our talented quartets will bring unforgettable music tailored to your occasion.

We perform at:

- Community Concerts & Festivals
- Grand Openings & Ribbon Cuttings
- Memorial Services & Celebrations of Life
- **Holiday Tree Lightings & Caroling Events**
- Weddings, Anniversaries & Private Celebrations
- Corporate Gatherings & Award Ceremonies
- Patriotic & Civic Events (**National Anthems**, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, etc.)
- Senior Living Communities & Community Outreach Programs
- **Singing Valentines & Special Deliveries (Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.)**

#### **Flexible Performance Lengths:**

Our typical sets range from 20 to 40 minutes, but we're happy to tailor the timing to suit your specific program or audience needs.

#### **Contact Us:**

**Email: [Info@StocktonPortsmen.org](mailto:Info@StocktonPortsmen.org)**

**Phone: (209) 881-SING (7464)**

**We'd love to bring harmony to your special event.  
Reach out today and let's create something memorable together.**



# Singing Valentines

*Say "I Love You!" with a song!*

\$50



Presented By:



This Gift Includes:

- A Quartet Singing 2 songs
- A lovely fresh red rose
- A Valentine's Card  
(with your personal message)

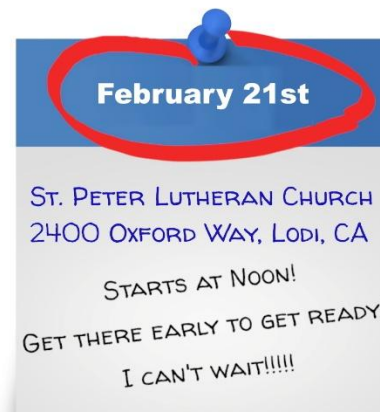
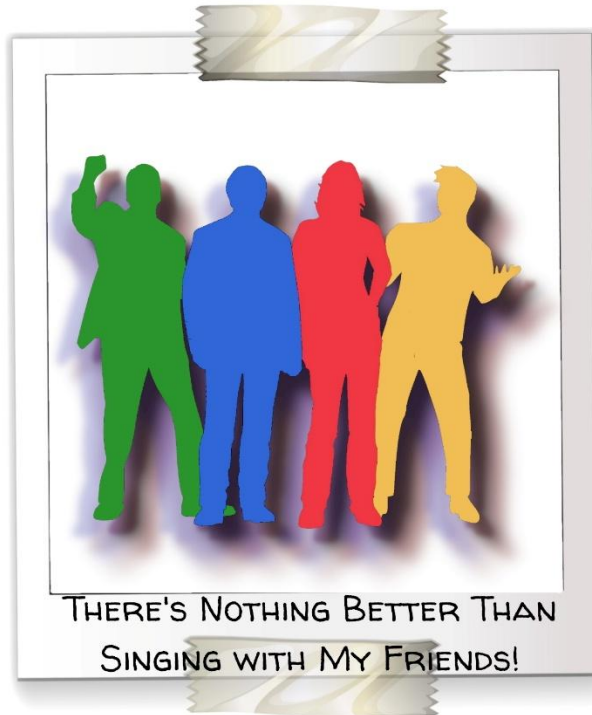
Order by Email

[valentine@stocktonportsmen.org](mailto:valentine@stocktonportsmen.org)

or Call

(209) 881-(SING)7464

# 2026 NorCal Novice Quartet Contest



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



EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:  
**INFO@STOCKTONPORTSMEN.ORG**  
OR CALL 209-881-7464

## THERE WILL BE 2 CATEGORIES:

- 1) REGULAR (ANY 4 BHS MEMBERS)
- 2) HIGH SCHOOL (ANY 4 STUDENTS)

**\$10** PER QUARTET MEMBER

**\$10** GENERAL ADMISSION

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:

**February 12th**

MAXIMUM OF **18** QUARTETS

## **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.

## **Weekly Chapter Meetings:**

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

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (**Grace Hall**)

VLQ: 8:00 PM – 8:30 PM (except board meeting nights)

*Rehearsals may be held at an alternate location from time to time  
please double-check the details.*

See calendar for up-to-date information:

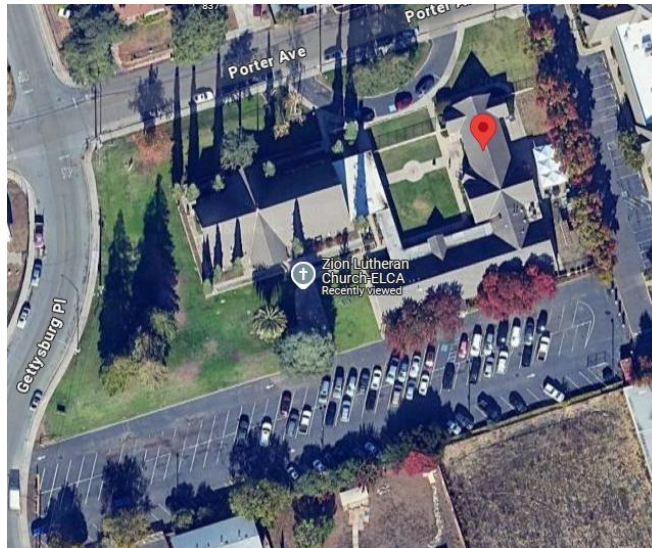
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

### 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.



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

### **2026**

- 1/13 Stockton Portsmen Installation Dinner - Barrel Room (Lodi, CA)
- 1/13-18 BHS Midwinter Convention (Pasadena, CA) – See link to buy streaming sessions: <https://live.barbershop.org/buy-sessions/>
- 2/13-14 Singing Valentine's [Click link for order form](#)
- 2/17 Coaching Session w/ Chris Hébert
- 2/21 Novice Contest hosted by Stockton Portsmen (Lodi, CA) [Click link for details](#)
- 3/19-21 2026 FWD Spring Convention, Northern Divisions (Stockton, CA)
- 4/12 2026 Spring HOD Meeting – 3pm via Zoom
- 4/25 Stockton Portsmen Spring Show “Santa’s Escape Plan” (Stockton, CA)
- 5/25 Memorial Day Service at Cherokee Memorial (Lodi, CA)
- 6/28-7/5 BHS International Convention (St. Louis, MO)
- 10/6-11 2026 FWD 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fall Convention (Honolulu, Hawaii)  
*(This is combined with the Pan Pacific Harmony 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/>

Voices of California (VoCal) <https://www.voicesofcalifornia.org/>