MELODIES for MILLIONS

S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.

A non-profit, educational and charitable organization founded in the state of Oklahoma.

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Melodies For Millions

By Will Cook

A Twenty-Five Year History

Published by the Society for the Preservation and
Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America Inc.

Owen C. Cash, Founder

Rupert I. Hall, Co-Founder

Acknowledgment

In addition to Author Will Cook, whose tragic death prevented him from finishing "Melodies For Millions", the Society is indebted to many Barbershoppers who assisted in the preparation of our twenty-five year history. When the book was in the planning stage much of the initial work was done by a special Twenty-Five Year History Committee comprised of former International Historian and Board Member Calmer Browy, former Executive Director Bob Hafer, former Public Relations Director and HARMONIZER Editor Curt Hockett, Headquarters Office Manager and Assistant International Treasurer Bill Otto and the late Stirling Wilson.

We also want to acknowledge the contributions of artist Rik Ogden, Miami, Florida, who created the cover, and Charlie Wilcox, Freeport, Illinois, who finished the book from Cook's notes and provided the Foreword.

Foreword

When I first delved into the mountain of notes left by Will Cook, the hundreds of pages of material furnished by dozens of V I Ps in our Society, years and years of HARMONIZERS and the early segments of "MELODIES FOR MILLIONS", my thought was: "It can't be done, not in the required time." But for one who was continually reminding others to accentuate the positive, that was no way to think. So I took pen in hand and commenced. It has been a pleasure, and I can truthfully say I know a great deal more about this Society than I could have ever learned in any other manner. For that I am grateful.

It was obvious at the beginning that Will Cook held the work of the Twenty-Five Year History Committee, and also "Keep America Singing" author-historian "Deac" Martin, in high regard. Also that there was little need of too much repetition of the ten-year period covered by Deac's book, which was prefaced as follows: "published by the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., to preserve the flavor, traditions and some principal records of progress and preservation." We think this preface applies equally well to our twenty-five year history, "MELODIES FOR MILLIONS".

Any history has a habit of evaluating and then re-evaluating men and the events they cause. Time stands still, watching us go by. Time remembers what has gone before, notes our failure to regard the past and tolerantly waits for the future to judge our work, hoping always that men may learn to revere the honest effort and sincerity of purpose shown by past workers even though they may not always be perfect in the sight of Time.

Any *general* history of a nation inevitably becomes a story of its executives and its generals. Here and there fate plays a hand in the emergence of someone from the ranks of those known to themselves and their leaders as "the public". Our Society calls them "the membership". Just who among them cast a deciding vote in electing leaders, just which private "on the line" pulled a trigger at the right instant, just which workman adjusted that trigger . . . these are things history rarely

records or even knows. The similarity found in the growth and history of our still young Society becomes obvious when one studies the record of our members and the events in which they have taken part or in which they will participate in days to come. There are, literally, thousands of men who have contributed much to our Society. Their number grows with each passing year. To have recalled each of them and their work was quite impossible in the space and time allotted to "MELODIES FOR MILLIONS". The transcriptions from the recorded voices of many of our most eminent members would fill two volumes the size of this one.

Our International magazine, THE HARMONIZER, is, of course, our best record of the happenings and events of the Society. Here, again, we cannot expect to find all who should be remembered. There is another place, too, where future generations *should* be able to delve to learn more. It is the history of the individual districts. I urgently request our districts to give serious thought to the early and careful preparation of their district history. Chapter bulletins, too, may augment the work of district publications, and in this manner ALL will have the credit due them.

All of us may recall the times we have heard a preacher rise to deliver his sermon and use these words: "The text for today's sermon comes from", and he would quote a Bible passage. As time has gone on we have come to hear more and more preachers alter this with "Today I wish to call your attention to a situation"; a newspaper story, a magazine article or even a criticism of the church and its work, may be the topic of discussion with frequent references to the methods to be used in applying the lessons of the past to the problems at hand. I sincerely hope that, following as closely as possible the outlines prepared by Will Cook, there will be within the pages of this text something to help furnish the solution for problems that are always with us.

Our Society sprang from the "nowhere" into the "here" without warning, without experience and to the surprise of its founders and members as well. The only guiding light we could have was that of other organizations . . . presented here and there by some of the outstanding men in our narrative: a light that all too often has not been followed. Too long have we

attempted to find excuses for our own failure rather than solutions to our problems.

However, there is evidence that we have outgrown the unguided passions of youth, and are slowly learning that all fun and no thought makes Joe a dull entertainer and a weakling who never recovers from his illness.

It took the Harmony Education Program and the Membership Benefit Plan to teach us many things. Today there is strong evidence that their effect has been far reaching enough to cause a few—here and there—to agree with one of our past International Quartet Champions, Morris Rector (bass of the "Gaynotes"), when he said: "It's time we stopped honkin' and start singing". In other words, it's time for us to stop being too noisy and to start producing a more musical sound through the use of the God-given natural harmony we have more or less adopted as our own.

Let us "Keep America Singing" but with fresh vigor and a fresh belief in a harmony style that can never grow old because it is nature's own. Let us carry on with "MELODIES FOR MILLIONS".

By Charlie Wilcox
12/3/65

SECTION I

"In this age of Dictators and Government control . . ."

"Mandy, and songs like these. . ."

The year was 1938.

It was April and Admiral William D. Leahy had stuck his professional neck out to warn the people that our great fleet was inferior to that of the Imperial Japanese Empire.

Some thought this heresy could cost him his command.

But generally people thought he was just talking and didn't pay much attention to it, and newspaper editors put it on the bottom of the second page and forgot about it.

Mrs. Dionne gave birth to her thirteenth child, a boy weighing seven and a half pounds, and *that* made the front page, in banner headlines.

That was news and everyone talked about it.

Mrs. Dionne was instantly famous.

In the more sophisticated movie houses, John Boles and Gladys Swarthout set hearts to pounding with their latest picture: *Romance In The Dark,* while in the rural theatres, patrons sat on the edge of their seat and munched popcorn as John Barrymore courted danger in *Bulldog Drummond Comes Back.*

People laughed and said the government was dishing out alphabet soup, with the *NRA* and the *WPA* and the *CCC,* yet they gathered around the radio when President Roosevelt held one of his 'fireside chats' and people generally agreed that things were taking a swing for the better.

Congress had just voted a billion and a half dollars to fight the recession, and the stock market indicated a turn upward toward full economic recovery.

In Van Horn, Texas, every man tall enough to carry a gun was looking for the killer who had brutally done in two attractive women.

Matrons elsewhere enjoyed the matinee and wept for Bette Davis in *Jezebel.*

Life was a mirror with an image for all of us.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, forty-six year old Owen C. Cash felt the strong proddings of his sense of humor and composed a letter to be mailed to friends. Cash was an ingenious, loveable, lazy man, full of a lazy man's cleverness, who worked very hard at the things that interested him, and remained pleasantly in-

different to the things that did not. He was a handsome man, slightly plump in the face. His hair was thinning and what remained was shot with gray, which gave him a distinguished sternness. Professionally he was an attorney.

Privately he was a prankster who felt too far was not quite far enough to go if it meant a good joke.

And he was about to make the biggest step in his life, only he didn't know it.

If anyone had suggested it to him, Owen Cash would have laughed, for he saw humor in many things.

Owen Cash was not an authority on four-part harmony. The truth of it was that he didn't know much about it at all, except that he had heard it, and liked it, and like any man with a relatively poor voice and a good ear for music, he felt the urge to sing.

The first draft of his famous letter seems to have been lost, if there was a first draft. If there was not, then the document that remains today is a monument to the lucid thinking of Owen Cash and his friend, Rupert Hall.

They wrote:

In this age of Dictators and Government control of everything, about the only privilege guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, not in some way supervised or directed, is the art of Barber Shop Quartet singing. Without doubt we still have the right of 'peaceable assembly' which, I am advised by competent legal authority, includes quartet singing. The writers have for a long time thought that something should be done to encourage the enjoyment of this last remaining vestige of human liberty. Therefore we have decided to hold a songfest on the Roof Garden of the Tulsa Club on Monday, April 11, at six-thirty P.M. A Dutch lunch will be served. As evidence of the work that your Committee has done in this connection, we enclose a compilation of most of the good old fashioned Barber Shop Quartet songs which we trust you will look over and familiarize yourself with. Bring this list with you. It is our purpose to start right in at the first, sing every song, in numerical order, plow right down the middle, and let the chips fall where they will. What could be sweeter than ten or twelve perfectly synchronized male voices singing "Dear Old Girl". Just thinking about it brought back to your Committee fond memories of a moonlight night, a hay ride and the soft young blonde summer visitor from Kansas City we dated on that occasion years

ago. Do not forget the date, and make every effort to be present; telephone us if convenient. We will have a private room and so will not be embarrassed by the curiosity of the vulgar public.

You may bring a fellow singer if you desire.

Harmoniously yours,

The Society For The Preservation and Propagation of Barber Shop Quartet Singing In The United States.

RUPERT HALL, Royal Keeper of the Minor Keys

Braniff Investment Co. Phone 2-9121

O. C. CASH, Third Asst. Temporary Vice-Chairman

Stanolind Companies Phone 2-3211

A few men remain today who attended that first meeting. There were twenty-five, as recalled by Cash in 1948.

And they sang. Not very well though.

It was fortunate that the "vulgar" public was excluded, for the public is rarely capable of grasping the importance of a great idea, and we have our innate suspicions when we see someone having a good time.

And the twenty-five men attending that first meeting had fun. They found a release in singing. There was a tenderness to the nostalgia recalled by the old songs like "I Had A Dream, Dear" and "Down Mobile".

The fire of brotherly love was kindled in kindred souls, with the harmony as a catalyst.

Harmony?

Yes, simple harmony, with the tenors staying pretty much on pitch with the leads, who sang the melody. The rest was sort of catch as catch can, with the bass singers moving along the root of the chords until they got bored and moved to the 'fifth', a natural jump for the basses. The baritones tried to take the note that was left, and there was a good deal of doubling of notes, but it was harmony, soul-satisfying harmony.

It was a beginning of a romance that has not ended today and perhaps will never end.

It is also nice to think that Owen Cash and Rupert Hall planned a barbershop singing society, and perhaps they did, on a community level, not realizing that with innate, shrewd insight, they had plunged to the depths of man's desire to express himself, to release himself, to give of himself a bit of his own creation, his voice blended with another.

great things from little accidents grow

A good thing is often more accident than design, and the expression of genius can be lost forever without a voice to spread it.

The Tulsa *Sunday Tribune* provided that voice, under the byline of Virginia Burch.

She thought the whole thing was very funny and wrote an article about it, and pushed the boat of four part harmony away from the mooring, to sail its course, which now almost seemed to be predestined.

The first meeting generated enough enthusiasm to prompt another, a week later.

More than seventy men attended.

A quartet appeared, and as O. C. Cash recalls, the first good quartet to sing at their meetings. The quartet had sung together before World War I and had not been together for ten years, yet they sang, "Shine", and "Roll Away Jordan", and as Cash put it, "Knocked the boys in the aisles".

A hundred and fifty attended the third meeting at the Alvin Hotel.

The newspapers still thought it was funny, but it was a story now, and Ralph Martin of the *Tulsa World* knew it.

That 'Singing Society' was on its way, moving, stumbling, faltering, but moving, picking up momentum, getting laughs, getting headlines: "QUARTETS GARGLE TONIGHT!" "GAG ORGANIZATION MAY SPREAD!" "BAWL GAME!"

In communications with the men who knew O. C. Cash well, who knew the beginning of it all well, there is considerable mixed emotion.

That Cash, once the organization got under way, coasted along without taking an active part in the leadership is true, if you care to look at it that way.

But in a sense, Owen Cash was like the doctor who delivers the child, spanks the first cry of life into it, then goes his own way while it matures and develops. Was this man, who in a

burst of humorous genius, touched a flame of comradeship in thousands of men required to nurse it also?

That hearty slap Cash gave to the *Society For The Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America* (as we know it today), that first breath of life fanned by this man, placed him forever foremost in the hearts of harmony lovers the world over.

Yes, Owen C. Cash coasted along, content to be the founder, content to let others run the organization, content to be on the fringe of it all, content to know that his gift to his fellowmen was both ageless and priceless.

Cash surely did more than begin 'that barbershop singing society'.

He gave us anew an almost forgotten piece of rich Americana.

Who were the men who made up this infant society?

Certainly they did not take themselves seriously, or their music seriously. By nature, by name, the whole thing was a big laugh.

A wonderful, harmless, enjoyable joke.

They did not consider, seriously, that what they offered filled a need in men's lives.

But fortunately it did, and this was soon realized for there was a deluge of interest from all parts of the country. There were no records, no central office, no central organization even to chronicle the first bloom. Chapters sprang up like weeds in an untended lot, chapters with no common thread except the idea and perhaps the name.

And like weeds, they died quickly, some never to bloom again.

It is strange, today, with the Society's programs for expansion, to go to some small town and have someone recollect that before the war a chapter was started.

"What did they do?"

"Oh, they just got together and sang a little."

"What happened to it?"

"Nothing came of it."

It is an old story. Chapters bloomed and died; they will never be counted. Yet like a mass charge against uncountable odds, some survived. Like a plague, some always lived through it.

They grew stronger because in a sense the idea could not be destroyed.

It was, in its own way, a musical gold rush, and this exodus alone made profound men glance seriously at this phenomenon,

to take a more studied notice, for nothing alarms the conservative more than a new musical craze, and this promised to be as engulfing as jazz had been.

The barbershop harmony of Owen Cash was as far removed from the harmony we sing today as were the pagan rhythms of Africans to the skilled variations of Gene Krupa, or the embellishments of Buddy Rich.

But one thing has not changed: the heart of the music, the living, pulsating heart which is the heritage of the men who sing it.

The first ten years were difficult ones. The organization was an idea, a loose idea, and endless details of organization slowly drew it together. One of the early presidents devoted a term of office to pulling together the 'chapters' into a coherent whole, so at least they knew who belonged and who didn't.

This in itself was a monumental task, but it was done.

Co-founder Rupert Hall, a broad-faced, rather chunky man with thick, dark eyebrows, became the first president. He also became responsible for digging into his pocket and paying the bills.

What did it take to be president?

You really had to love barbershop harmony.

You had to have a lot of time.

And a lot of money, because dues collection if any was sketchy, and the president just naturally had to pay the bills.

And there were always bills for something.

They had to have stationery.

And postage.

And this and that.

In 1939 the first contest was held for barbershop quartets.

Twenty-three competed.

By today's standards they were terrible.

Yet they were great, and even that is too mild, too ineffectual a word to use. They were pioneers, pace-setters, stylists; they were leaders and there were men waiting to be led.

"After the Ball", "My Gal Sal", "Mandy Lee", "Curse Of An Aching Heart. . ."

People were surprised because good money was put down just so men could listen to these songs.

The only people who weren't at all surprised were the men who sang them. They knew what they had, and knew where they were going, yet those first men making up the twenty-three quartets could not really envision the magnitude of their hobby.

They could only hope.

1948, the tenth year of the Society, saw four hundred and eighty chartered chapters in forty states, and Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam.

Ten years of devotion, mistakes, and fantastic progress.

In 1948, Deac Martin finished a labor of love, a book called *Keep America Singing;* it was a definitive work, a history of the Society and the first ten years of growth.

It is now 1963, twenty-five years since Owen C. Cash wrote his letter and had a good laugh over it.

Twenty-five years since they first sang "Mandy".

Barbershoppers are still singing "Mandy".

Yet much has happened. A lot of songs have come and gone. A lot of men have come and gone. There has been movement, excitement, heartbreak, dizzy heights scaled, and some pits of despair peered into and studied.

A lot has happened in twenty-five years; another book is being written about the men and the songs and the times that are a bit of our past and certainly are a part of our future.

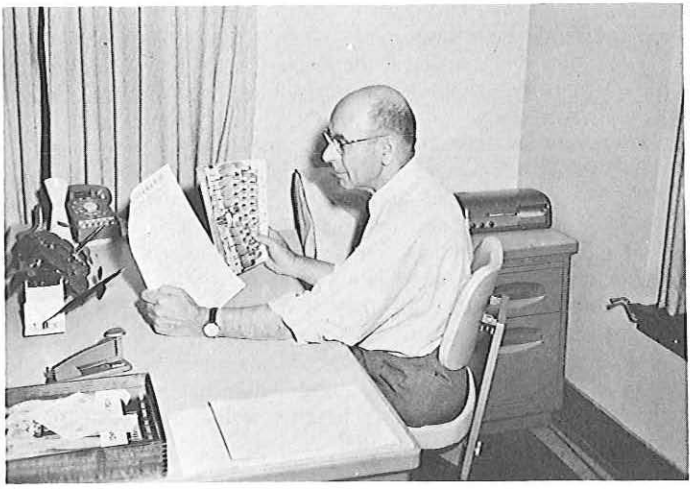
This is what happened . . .

. . . the pen is mightier than the pitchpipe. . .

During his one year term as International Secretary-Treasurer, (1941-1942) Joseph E. Stern of Kansas City, Missouri, conceived the idea of a national publication to knit the scattered and uncertain chapters into a feeling of togetherness. The International organization was three years old, tottery, with no funds, and President Carroll Adams, an adroit, smooth-talking man, was trying to sift out the live chapters from the corpses that had died during the sudden flare of interest.

Records were confused, incomplete, and nearly non-existent.

The first issue, dated November 1941, was mimeographed on fourteen by seventeen paper, which was then doubled to make four pages, legal size. It bore the title: *Barbershop Re-Chordings.*



Joseph E. Stern

Joseph E. Stern's name appeared on the masthead as Editor, Publisher, and Office-boy. On the back was a barbershop arrangement of "Sweet, Sweet Roses of Morn", done by Phil Embury. In addition it carried news of various chapters, an advertisement for Society decals, a founder's message, and various hodge-podge as could be scraped together and stuffed into it.

In all, it was well done, satisfying, and the beginning of an unbroken chain.

By the fourth issue, the name became *The Harmonizer,* conveniently borrowed from the Joplin, Missouri Chapter bulletin. The name was actually taken with permission and during the first five years of publication, Dick Sturges of Atlanta, Georgia, designed many of the covers. (The Harmonizer was commercially printed as soon as possible by the Society.) Sturges also designed the Society's insignia, after preliminary sketches had been supplied by Joseph Wolff, of Detroit, Michigan; Sturges refined the insignia into its present form.

The Harmonizer now arrives in each member's mail box every two months and by and large, they are happy with it because it is a good magazine. But the writer had an opportunity to enjoy The Harmonizer as it should be enjoyed; he took four days off and read every article in every issue, emerging through the two foot stack with bloodshot eyes and an exciting concept

of what the Society was, what it is today, and where it is going, if one can reasonably base future possibilities on past trends.

The fellowship which overlooks human foibles, reciprocates and binds together for the common good of the membership the largest singing organization in the world; the music is a panacea which allows the Society to pick up and go on after a severe stumble.

We have, outside the Society, no greater critics than we have within for among our membership we have men who seem singularly dedicated to seeking out our deficiencies, pointing them up, demanding remedies. No facet of our activity escapes these men; they are eternal watchdogs, poking, prying, peering, examining, studying, modifying, suggesting, demanding.

Without these men we would never have pushed ourselves away from the lamp post the public had barbershopping leaning against for fifty years. We would never have taken our music from the saloon to the concert hall, taken it so far away from the saloon that only a few still connect barbershop harmony with the nickel beer and, for the singers, the stout support of the local bar.

We will never sing well enough to please some of these men, or conduct ourselves perfectly enough. It is not that we are blessed with visionaries. Quite the contrary. Our internal critics can generally see no farther than their noses, yet they take present excellence, which is our standard, and move it beyond us so that we are runners dashing for a visible yet constantly retreating finish line.

This is their hope, that one day we will be known universally for our great music.

Our great and highly respected judging program does not exist because we were ever satisfied; it exists because men were not satisfied. The Society's Harmony Education Program is not a product of our satisfaction, but of our demanding discontent with our own performance.

There is no organization existing which demanded or even suggested that we progress; the Society has always done its own soul searching, its own seeking out of the truth; we are complete masters of our own inquisition. It has gone on for twenty-five years and will continue; we are forever brooming out our house.

Dissent is the foundation of accord.

We are fortunate that the Society has attracted men who would rather be able to appreciate the things they can't have

than to have things they are not able to appreciate.

No finger can be pointed at any single man with the declaration that he made 'the' significant contribution. Not even Owen C. Cash could, or would claim that honor. The Society's function is musical idealism; it is an organization where 'giving' comes before 'receiving' and in truth, a man gets very little out of barbershopping unless he gives of himself and his time.

The member who attends chorus rehearsal each week and then goes home has lost more than he ever knew existed, for in truth he has had very little, save the songs and the fun of singing them.

Progress and growth hinges largely upon this member being conscious of the big picture, conscious of it because he has become a part of it.

". . . a good tenor is hard to find . . ."

Rupert Hall, a close friend of Owen Cash, was one of the signers of the original letter. When a man first met Hall, one had the distinct impression that he was a man you could have fun with, but no man to have trouble with.

Rupert Hall was the first president of the Society.

He was raised in a little town in western Iowa—Neola—about a thousand people and remembers, as a boy, hearing barbershop harmony sung in Pat Doyle's barbershop. Pat Doyle was an Irish tenor of the first water and since the barbershop in any small town is really an institution, a man's club, it was only natural that a good deal of activity centered there. A man could gossip, discuss crops, get a haircut, a shave and a bath. The local baseball team used it as a clubhouse.

The silver cornet band practiced there.

It was the first business open in the morning and the last to close at night.

It was a very democratic club and any man could attend, and on Saturday night, while you waited your turn in the chair, you could hear the church choir warming up.

As far as Owen Cash is concerned, Hall knew him casually,

but in 1938, in March, chance brought them together. This was in Kansas City and Cash was returning to Tulsa while Hall was on his way from Tulsa to New York; both were on business and were grounded because of poor flying weather. (A plaque in the Hotel Muehlebach now commemorates the spot where the two men met.)

Cash actually mentioned barbershop harmony first and they sang a few songs as a duet; he carried the lead and Hall sang the tenor. They both wished they had a bass and baritone to complete the quartet, and Cash suggested they get together in Tulsa.

They did and drafted the famous letter; the rest took care of itself.

Most of the men at that first meeting had done some quartet singing, albeit not of professional quality. No one knew what professional quality barbershop harmony was, yet in Hall's recollection there was an underlying idealism, a sheer expression of joy in this revitalized form of American music.

Hall, as co-founder of the Society, met newly elected President Carroll Adams at the meeting in St. Louis. From the start he was impressed with Adam's suggestions on how to run a national organization, something which Cash and Hall were unprepared to do.

Carroll P. Adams

They also met Dr. Norman Rathert, who had more energy than any dozen men, and was a fine musician. It was Dr. Rathert who directed the first organized chorus singing barbershop harmony. He also served as second president (1940-41) and during his term of office, introduced at the St. Louis Convention some of the judging categories which provided the basis for our present judging system.

When Rupert Hall talked about the men he had known, the men who did so much to further barbershop harmony, one instantly realizes that it is impossible to take them one by one, do a sketch on them and then put them aside and go on to the next man. By the very nature of the organization, they pop up again and again, like characters in a novel viewed through many lenses until finally they are understood, for their strengths and their weaknesses.

In talking to Rupert Hall, it was suggested that perhaps his memory, stretching back over the years, had deliberately glossed over certain irritating traits in the personalities of the people he knew, for he spoke of them with a definite 'sweetness of mind'.

His reply is not only profound, but interesting and ringing true.

"About this 'great sweetness', let me say that very few of us ever had an opportunity to view the bad side of a man's character, if such a side existed at all.

"We sang together, laughed together, and seldom did we know of his business life, or his personal affairs. We only knew him as a good harmony singer. Of course it made a difference if a man drank too much, but we could excuse this weakness if he loved harmony.

"I know some chapters had strong and sometimes bitter differences among members, but I never was involved, so now, if I talk kindly about a man, it is because I never saw his bad side, if he had one.

"This to me is the strange attraction of our fellowship, our ability to get along with one another.

"And like Will Rogers, I never knew a true Barbershopper whom I didn't like.

"Of course I've heard complaints about members. As an example, Dr. Norman Rathert. Some have said that he was too intense, too domineering, and too forward. When Cash and I first met him, he was very critical of the way we were running the Society.

"This was rather a challenge, so Cash and I harnessed his energy. Rathert worked hard, made enemies, and friends, but his work was so intense we had to overlook his attitude. He could and did put across a great program and there are some who feel that he stepped on toes. But his contributions more than outweighed his personal shortcomings.

"Cash loved his fellow men; he was democratic to the nth degree. Rich or poor, it made no difference to him.

"You may say that I am blind to Barbershoppers' faults, but their interest in barbershop harmony was a common denominator that smoothed our way. I can liken my relationship with a Barbershopper with a fellow you might like for a fishing companion. He likes your company and therefore maintains good deportment. It's the same with a Barbershopper.

"If a man is a heel, he usually doesn't last more than one meeting so you really don't get to know him.

"And I can remember, not by name or face, some heels who showed up but lasted only a short time."

If ever a man needed proof that only the sound of barbershop harmony has changed through the years he need only study Rupert Hall's remarks.

Barbershop harmony was never, and never will be, a receptacle for the 'odd-ball', the 'butter-and-egg-man'.

A man who can't mix, who can't get along, finds barbershop harmony an intolerable hobby.

Hall has given us a message: When you look for new members, you look for grand guys for it is easier to teach a grand guy to sing than it is to teach a singer to be a grand guy.

A man has to 'give' in barbershop harmony, and he starts by blending, bending his voice in the musical chord. He begins by subjugating his will to that of the chorus director, to that of the chorus.

SECTION II

At first there was organized confusion

When the Society was first organized twenty-five years ago, it seemed almost natural and excusable that chapters would spring up, bloom for a brief time, then die from lack of proper musical direction. And today, with the Society's administrative network, finances, music and information publishing program, educational facilities and seminars, chapter failure would seem a remote, infrequent possibility; figuratively speaking, the Society can put its entire complex behind a newly formed chapter and protect it from the vicissitudes new chapters soon come to know.

Kenosha, Wisconsin is the central office and from there radiate fifteen districts, each with autonomy, that precious right of self government. The districts, some large, some small, some solvent, some poor, are made up of individual chapters, and they in turn are governed by elected officers not under direct, binding district supervision.

Each operates within a framework of ideals and purposes, which throws the strength of the Society onto the chapters; weakness there weakens the whole.

When a new chapter is formed, it is usually sponsored by another chartered chapter. This sponsorship can consist of nothing more than signatures on the petitioning chapter's charter, or it can be crammed with cooperation and assistance through the first formative year. Much of the new chapter's success depends upon the sponsoring chapter's effort, not the first-night burst of enthusiasm, but the long-pull help and guidance.

Generally, the first spark is ignited by a Barbershopper trying to spread the word, or by a man who has become enthusiastic from hearing good barbershop harmony sung. Once a meeting place has been established, the sponsoring chapter generally appears in force; a quartet or two may show up and sing for the new group. The new group is invited to sing along with the sponsoring chapter, a simple song, but enough to convince the new group that they can sing barbershop harmony.

They are led the first evening by the sponsoring chapter's director, or some experienced quartet man who is capable of teaching four parts, and by the time they go home, the new group is convinced that they are going to enjoy this. The sponsoring chapter also feels that they're a grand bunch of guys and will make it.

And by and large they stop worrying about them.

The next meeting held by the new group is somewhat different; they came to sing, but who is going to lead them? Where the first meeting ended on a high note of optimism, the second likely will not. They are leaderless.

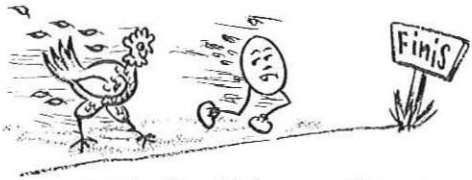
They are new.

They don't really know where to turn.

They've been set adrift and abandoned.

And this happens often enough to be alarming.

By the same token many sponsoring chapters stand behind new groups, offering suggestions as to chorus directors that could be hired, and guiding the new men in the selection of temporary officers and what administrative duties encompass. This type of sponsorship practically insures a new chapter's success, for it emulates the sponsor which, by the demonstration of its help, attests to its own health.



. . . was it the chicken, or the egg

When a chapter of the Society has been founded, organized, and is meeting regularly, usually the chapter chorus is their expression of barbershop.

This may not be the way Owen C. Cash planned it, but it *is* the way chapters are formed and conducted today. New chapter or not, some member it seems has had a hand-shaking acquaintance with harmony of the vocal variety. Some have sung with their families, or in school as a member of the glee club, or in the church choir. They like 'gang' singing; it is a natural inclination.

The chorus is the corner stone of barbershop chapters, while the quartets spearhead the musical advancements and act as our most effective salesmen and public relations men. While the Society promotes more quartets, encourages their formation, and features them as the finest examples of the barbershopping art, the chorus has gained for itself both recognition and a place in the musical field.

Some members of the Society observed with misgivings this prominence of chorus singing, and still do.

Past International President, the late John Means presented a good case for the chorus in 1948 when he said:

"I've frequently heard expressions that our Society is primarily a quartet society, and that in many minds the chorus is out of place. I do not believe these fears are justified. In the third annual Land O'Lakes District Contest there were more than six hundred men participating in eighteen choruses. This meant they had more than one hundred fifty potential quartet men singing harmony. Chorus work taught these men their parts, gave them valuable information about harmony, exposed them to good technical advice from their director, and while this may not have had a material bearing on the development of championship quartets, this knowledge made possible a great increase in 'woodshedding', which is fun and a basic necessity in our Society.

"A chorus helps keep any chapter alive. It simplifies programming and maintains interest, for all of us, good and bad, enjoy listening but enjoy singing even more. The chorus contest encourages directors and members to go into the intricacies of judging more carefully and the result is better informed Barbershoppers. With more knowledge comes more thorough enjoyment and a higher standard in the minds of Barbershoppers for public performance."

Cy Perkins, baritone of the Past International Champion quartet, the *Misfits,* spoke out in 1954, expressing thoughtfully a different point of view.

"I have several inhibitions about our Society as it exists today and the Society as I knew it when I joined in 1939. First among these doubts is the matter of chorus development. Not that I object to the chorus; I admire their work and recognize their importance to the Society. But it seems to me that in the last several years the chorus movement has become so hefty that it is crowding out of the picture the singing unit that our founder, O. C. Cash, had in mind. I refer of course to the barbershop quartet. I'm sure we'll always have quartets and choruses but hasn't too much emphasis been placed on the chorus? Or is that the way it's supposed to be?"

There have been surveys and the results have often been inconclusive. Members complained that there was too much chorus singing. Some thought that there was not enough chorus singing.

Some chapters do not have members interested enough to organize into quartets, and without the chorus they would have

practically no activity.

It is true that the best chapters in the Society encourage quartet activity and have a great deal of it.

So do the poorest chapters.

The encouragement and formation of the "pick up" quartet can help a chapter, but in the long run, quartets are formed because one man is interested enough to get three other men together and practice.

. . . stop me if you've heard this one . . .

It is surprising, since Owen C. Cash, the Society's founder, was a man with an outstanding sense of humor, that the word doesn't crop up more often as a part of the official pledge of purpose. For certainly humor has been a stock in trade for the last twenty-five years and is as much a part of the singing as the notes themselves.

Everyone seems to agree that Cash was a very funny fellow and the recorded antics of his quartet, *The Okie Four,* seem to bear this out. But under this light, another man's humor has not been fully appreciated, and that man was the late F. Stirling Wilson of Ormond Beach. Florida, a long-time Barbershopper and steady contributor to *The Harmonizer.*

Many men did not appreciate Stirling Wilson. as many did not appreciate Robert Benchley's Mona-Lisa-smile witticism, and it certainly is a shame for Wilson's wit and sense of comedy was outstanding. He pointed up the foibles of Barbershoppers for years in his column and did it in the nicest possible way, with humorous satire.

Particularly we are indebted to Wilson for editing Milt Plapinger's collection of humorous happenings to Barbershoppers over the years; they illuminated a corner of our Society rarely revealed in press releases or publicity programs.

Like the time Mark Bowsher, of the Daytona Beach, Florida Chapter, was getting in a little quartet singing in a public place. A stranger stopped and listened and the quartet worked excep-

tionally hard to please their "audience" and finished the song. They were completely shattered when the stranger didn't even mention the song, but said, "Excuse me. Do you have change for a quarter? I want to make a phone call."

John Neimer, a very prominent man in the Society, attended the Philadelphia Convention in 1961 and he was a part of a quartet belting one in front of the Belleveue-Stratford hotel at a late hour. "A crowd gathered and seemed to be enjoying it when suddenly, while we were stretching out a dandy chord, a police car screeched to a stop and an officer popped out, grabbed me by the shoulder and said, 'Now you listen to me, buddy!' A hundred thoughts ran through my mind as the hand of the law gripped me. Then came the killer; still frowning sternly, he growled: 'One of you guys is flat.' With that he jumped back into the police car and was giving me the big horse laugh as he drove off."

When the Columbians quartet of Washington, D.C. registered at the convention, the spokesman for the quartet told the desk clerk: "Ball and Yznaga will room together." The clerk asked, "How do you spell Ball?"

A few barbershoppers were trying to get lunch at the crowded and overtaxed facilities at San Francisco's Jack Tar Hotel during a district convention and the pert waitress was doing her best. A non-Barbershopper was growing increasingly aggravated and finally snapped: "What do you have to do to get a glass of water around here?"

Dave Stevens, sitting nearby, said, "Why don't you set yourself afire?"

Barbershop harmony often triggers a chain reaction. Across the street from the Schwarz Boch Hotel in Wiesbaden, Germany, there happens to be a sidewalk beer garden and *The Preccisionists* from Washington, D.C. happened to be relaxing there. They started to sing and the curved front of the Schwarz Boch formed a natural amplifier. Several hundred Germans happened along to break up what they thought was a riot. They listened while Mickey Beall sang *Rose of Tralee.* Two American school teachers rushed up breathlessly. They said they happened to be two blocks away when they heard American voices singing *Carolina In The Morning,* descending. as it seemed, out of Heaven. Traffic in front of the Schwarz Boch remained stalled for an hour.

You see, in barbershopping, that's what happens.

Jim Strong of the Hamptons Chapter, East Hampton, N.Y., relates that his quartet, *The Chord Lords,* were rehearsing at baritone, Ed Koral's home. They were working on *Baby Your Mother,* and were repeating the line: . . . "don't put it off 'til tomorrow . . . go home and say, 'Mom, I love you'" . . . Finally Ed's wife came from the kitchen and said, "Ed, I just can't stand it anymore. I have to call home." (That was to Buffalo, N.Y., a distance of some six hundred miles.) Ed joked about the fact that the rehearsal cost him a six dollar phone call. The next week when he showed up for rehearsal he requested that they meet anywhere but at his house. During the phone call his wife got carried away and decided to visit her mother and the whole family flew to Buffalo at a cost of one hundred sixty-six dollars. Needless to say, *The Chord Lords* dropped "California Here I Come" for obvious reasons.

In 1948, The Diplomats, a quartet from the Washington, D.C. chapter, sang at the 1948 convention and placed as semi-finalists. Even though they did not make the big time, they had their admirers, as they learned when they were greeted in the hotel lobby by a kindly old gentleman who assured them that they were his favorite quartet. They thanked him and he appeared somewhat puzzled; then he fumbled with a small case in his vest pocket. He exclaimed, "I can never get this danged hearing aid to work."

Navy Commander Sev Severance was the lead in the original Quaker City Four, and he had arranged for the quartet to sing at a dinner for Navy men, a mixed compliment of 'brass' and 'gobs'. During the first song one of the sailors became boisterous and Sev stared at him, but it didn't help. Incensed at this combination of inattention and insubordination, Sev furtively leaned backward, picked up a hard roll off the table behind him, took aim, and salvoed. It landed smack on the forehead, right between the eyes. The quartet sailed through the rest of the repertoire with ensigns flying, uncontested, unmolested.

Order can be restored in other ways, as International President Clarence Jalving found out in Dallas. The International Board meeting had been in hot debate when the waiter entered with the coffee. Jalving interrupted to say that they had discussed the matter in sufficient detail and that tempers should be restrained. He went on to state that "the chair would entertain a motion." At this point the waiter said, "Ah moves that somebody sign this check." Good humor was immediately restored to the board meeting.

The late Milt Plapinger, humorist, Barbershopper, and fine student of human nature, for years collected these notes, quotes, and anecdotes. A classic exchange between Barbershoppers went as follows:

Ken Williams, from Montclair, New Jersey, wrote to show chairman, Gene Plapinger: "Please send me three tickets for the Philadelphia Festival of Harmony on May 14th."

Plapinger to Williams: "Enclosed are three tickets you requested for our Festival of Harmony on May 7th."

Ken to Gene: "Thanks for the three fine seats. Will see you on May 14th."

Gene back to Ken: "Our show is still scheduled for May 7th. However, if you insist on coming down on May 14th we'll be glad to send you a list of local events taking place on that date."

The Society's quartets, like *The Buffalo Bills,* who reached the pinnacle of show business success, often run into humorous situations. Jimmy Durante was appearing at the Sert Room in one of New York City's bright spots, and the Buffalo Bills were also billed there. Although in a desperate hurry, Durante let the quartet go on first because someone told him: "Listen, Jimmy, if they have to follow your act they're dead." When the Buffalo Bills came off, the Schnozzola greeted them with: "Now looka whatcha done to me! You stopped the show and I gotta follow you!"

Everyone, it seems, has a mouth enlarged by the simple process of putting the foot in it. An incident which happened in the 1959 Regionals in the Mid-Atlantic District illustrates well just how this is done. One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of Jean Boardman's *Close That Eye,* sung by the Danville Chorus. Sitting up front in the auditorium were the 'C' Notes, a brand new quartet who had tested the mike prior to the performance. The lead leaned over after the song ended and in a rather audible tone said, "I don't think that's much of a song. It lacks punch and doesn't seem to have a melody line." He went on a bit more and then the Emcee said: ". . . and present with us tonight is the composer of *Close That Eye,* Jean Boardman." With that, the gentleman sitting next to the lead stood up and took a bow.

The 'C' Notes came up with probably the greatest shocker of all time in the finals of the 1960 Mid-Atlantic District competition. In their second number, called *Paddy McGinty Plays The Harp,* the lead stepped out to sing a solo passage only to be

hit square in the face by a cream pie flung by another member of the quartet. Later the judges asked the 'C' Notes how they were expected to score a pie.

There are many humorous happenings to the men in the Society, and unfortunately they go unrecorded, except for the efforts of F. Stirling Wilson and Milt Plapinger. At one time *The Evans Quartet* from Salt Lake City, Utah, were seriously criticized for not singing to the balcony, not looking up while they performed. Realizing that this criticism had some foundation, they promised themselves to remedy this on the next show, and they did. They gave their usual fine performance and when the house lights went up and they could see the interior of the theatre they found that there wasn't any balcony.

A barbershop quartet will often travel great distances to perform on a show and when they get there find that the chapter is putting on a musical, with actions, props, and all that kind of a production entails. Little theatre groups would rehearse it for three weeks, but the quartets just ask the show chairman to fill them in, play it by ear and a vast store of experience, and do a beautiful job.

It is rare to see a good quartet flub badly on stage.

. . . take me to your leader . . .

The Society was beginning to wake up to the fact that it had long since passed the 'gag stage', and a good deal of attention was placed on good conduct and getting credit for it.

Walter Jay Stephens wrote that a job each chapter has yet to do is to convince all who write for local papers that the Society is past the gag stage.

Stephens believed that we must never take ourselves too seriously or become 'blue nosers' but it is our duty to protect ourselves against erroneous statements made about the Society in the local press, bearing in mind that such statements are almost invariably due to ignorance and not malice. Practically all newspapers are interested in Society doings, but occasionally some headline writer will write a line that will give an entirely wrong

impression, as in an Eastern city where a large newspaper announced a forthcoming Society event under the headline: *"AND THE BEER WILL FLOW."*

Yes, times have certainly changed. Cash, who didn't really care what was said as long as the name was spelled right, put up with this type of coverage because that was about all he got.

But, like Walter Stephens said, we must get proper credit for what we do properly.

S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. was becoming one of the world's largest musical organizations, and as Walter Stephens said, "We were getting credit for it."

S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. Inc. still had a long way to go, and there were men in the Society determined to get there.

They knew that while the Society's public performances were good, they were not professional and unless there was a change, Barbershoppers would remain only passable amateurs.

What started as purely quartet singing evolved into chorus singing under capable directors. Men who could not sing in a quartet due to limitations on time, or inability to sing that well, found a welcome home in the chorus.

The keystone of chapter strength, and perhaps the genesis of the Society's growth, stemmed from Dr. Norman Rathert's first organized chorus.

That was where Joe Average Man could learn to sing barbershop.

The chorus director was a musician, and occasionally had some formal training; he was a man who could readily recognize the flaws in barbershop harmony, not as it was being written, but as it was being sung. Because of the fun aspects of this hobby, some barbershop singers felt that as long as it was loud, it was good. This notion was not generated particularly by Owen Cash; it was a part of barbershop harmony, so much so that it had always been associated with a certain uncouth element in a community, and drinking. Barbershop, for many years, was synonymous with a lamp post and four men leaning against it for mutual support and singing *Sweet Adeline* at the top of their lungs, all four parts slightly off pitch.

In 1925, many years before Owen Cash wrote his letter and launched S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A., Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, renowned musical scholar, wrote in his book *Barbershop Ballads and How to Sing Them,* "Anyone who has attended a party where inhibitions were gradually removed will remember the almost inevitable result of this freedom from self-consciousness was an outbreak

of song, particularly on the part of the males, and this music invariably took the form of 'close harmony' of the barbershop variety. If any of the guests didn't like it, they moved to a discreet distance and played bridge."

Barbershop harmony, leaning more toward the male expression of virility, rather than musical harmony, was not popular, except with those who were singing it at the moment.

Again, Spaeth wrote: "Barbershop harmony really begins at the end and works backwards. If a quartet is well equipped with 'wicked' endings, the body of the song may be fairly conventional. It is the close that leaves the final fragrance of the barbershop, and if this be beautifully flavored with a nostalgic aroma, it matters little what has gone before. The most obvious harmonies are forgotten in a really subtle finish.

"The first and most practical advice, therefore, to actual and potential singers of the barbershop ballad is: get up plenty of good endings. Know them by heart and by number, so that they can be introduced at a moment's notice, to the amazement of every listener.

"It is the final effect that counts."

Dr. Spaeth was not introducing a new or novel idea to the singers of close harmony; they had always felt that way; the listener took their music or left it alone, and the singers could not have cared less.

Fortunately, Dr. Norman Rathert and Jean Boardman and Charles Merrill did not agree at all.

Jean Boardman, a tall, scholarly man with a long, stern face, knew good music. He liked harmony. He liked barbershop, not the kind that was being sung, but the kind he knew trained voices were capable of singing. He was not alone, and his energy and talent and inflexible commandments in the face of stern resistance heralded the era of the most important man in a barbershop chapter: the chorus director.

These men did not arrive full blown on the scene, filled with important barbershop knowledge. They had a background in music perhaps, and fine, inquisitive minds, but the art of teaching barbershop singing was something they had to learn.

And the large, important difference between these directors and the men singing the songs was that the directors viewed effort and result in a professional perspective while the chorus member was content to get through one song and on to the next.

The chorus director today can attend schools sponsored and supported by the Society, read many books written by talented

and experienced directors, and become expert in the many phases of barbershop harmony.

But what about the man who worked it all out?

Not one man, surely. Many men.

. . . the reason I called this meeting . . .

One of them was Frank Thorne, International President in 1946 and 1947. He was medium tall, slender, balding, very distinguished, with a mustache; he presented a commanding appearance but at the same time seemed to have a twinkle in his eye. He was an excellent business man, being vice president of one corporation and president of several others as well as a member of the board in additional companies. Frank was a good instrumental musician and a fine singer; he sang bass with the 1942 International Champion Elastic Four.

Frank H. Thorne

Frank's trademark in the Society was his writing longhand notes in the margins of letters sent to him to mail back as replies. One of his most famous replies was one he addressed to then International Secretary Carroll Adams; at one point on a margin of a letter several pages long, Frank wote: "Nuts!"

Frank Thorne was one of the most aptly named men; Frank was really "frank"! He had a way of making comments and offering constructive criticism which was startling in its bluntness and brevity, but you remembered what he had to say and you knew he said it for the good of the Society or your own personal good. He was outspoken but never mean or vindictive.

He had a sense of humor too. He was asked by the Executive Committee several years prior to his death to talk to a recalcitrant District President, one who had called a lot of us Communists and was really stirring things up. Frank was asked to tone him down.

When reporting on his success he opened the conversation by saying, "I talked to God last night."

He was an excellent correspondent and took great pains to say the right thing and to be as helpful as possible in letters to arrangers and quartet men.

Carroll Adams was the Society's first administrator.

Stirling Wilson gives us a picture of Adams: robust appearing, energetic, dominating. systematic, aggressive, a tough man in a fight, a skillful politician, and a man who understood music.

But most important for the time, Carroll Adams understood other men.

Adams was in a position to watch the growth of the Society. When he took over in the fall of 1941 as National President, the Society had something like two thousand members and had issued about forty charters, but in those days the issuing of a charter was simply a matter of getting three dollars out of an interested man and sending him a charter and telling him to go ahead and form a chapter.

In those days there was no per capita tax and the only thing a man paid to belong was fifty cents for his membership certificate.

The Society had less than a hundred dollars in the treasury when Adams assumed the presidency and Joe Stern took over the job of secretary-treasurer. During that year there was some growth and that's the year Hal Staab became so deeply interested in the Society. At the Grand Rapids convention in 1942, Hal agreed to serve as president providing Adams would stay

on as secretary and Joe Stern as treasurer.

So that was the team for 1942 to 1944.

The 1946 International Quartet Contest was held in Cleveland, and 75 quartets participated. The Society had come a far piece, harking back to the days when a contest was a popularity thing and the audience, or musically unqualified judges, picked the winner, and mostly on showmanship and audience appeal. The officers had hammered out a judging program, still a bit crude, but certainly soundly founded, and qualified men were on the panel, men who knew barbershop, knew how to sing it, and knew how it ought to be sung.

After the last chord had been sung and the judges' total was given to the announcer, the *Garden State Quartet* from Jersey City emerged as the International Champions, and the *Kansas City Serenaders* were fourth-time bridesmaids, in second place.

Dr. Sigmund Spaeth, renowned 'Tune Detective' of radio days, emceed the show to a sell-out crowd of eight thousand, and *The Misfits,* 1945 International Champions, entertained the audience while the judges tallied the final score.

So what was all the hollering about?

Ask any Barbershopper what happens when four men, each singing their note of a chord, hit it right, lock it and stand there with that stupid, my-God-this-is-real-bliss look on their faces.

He'll tell you that this is living, really living.

The man who sings in a quartet understands a lot. He knows what a good chord sounds like.

And like the jazz musician, he failed to realize, for a long time, that his music was universally appealing only to those performing.

Barbershoppers were baffled, and many still are, by the fact that the people who listen to it do not get the smash out of it that the singers do. They may like to listen to it, love to listen to it, but the real knock is to sing it. Get them singing four-part harmony and you've really reached them.

Old time tent-preachers knew this. Get them stamping, get them shouting Hallelujah, and you've opened the door for the Lord to come in.

The answer was obvious: get a man to sing in a quartet and you've just landed a new Society member.

Great idea, only it didn't really work.

It took a fair voice and a good ear to fall into a quartet, even when singing the simplest harmonies and there were a lot of men around with the desire to sing, but not the talent for quartet work. Not right away at least.

. . . the chorus: happy home for "fifth wheels"

Born of necessity, the barbershop chapter chorus was the answer to countless thousands who could make the weekly meetings, learn their music under a musical director, and sing up a storm.

Things were changing. Woodshed barbershopping was losing ground to the written arrangement. Frank Thorne, incoming president and bass of the 1942 Champions, *The Elastic Four,* was one of the first men to rely on the printed arrangement. Prior to this, most of the quartets put their music together strictly by ear, but Thorne, and a few others, believed that a house is better built when a plan is followed. His quartet, *The Elastic Four,* was organized specifically to win the championship, and Thorne, as organizer, auditioned them individually, arranged the music, rehearsed them, and won the contest.

He liked the practical, business approach to his music and his administration.

The chorus was taking on a stronger, more decisive role in barbershop harmony.

And while some complained about the chorus singing, the written arrangements and loudly declared conditions were going from bad to worse, the Society took on members and there was talk about having an International Chorus Contest, where each district would present its best chorus.

A very brave man, the late Carl Jones of Terre Haute, Ind., who later served the Society as International Board Member and First Vice-President, broached that radical idea, but it took root.

They argued, fought, disagreed, and became disagreeable, but the idea was sound and planning began at the grass roots level.

. . . O. C. Cash never wanted us to be so organized

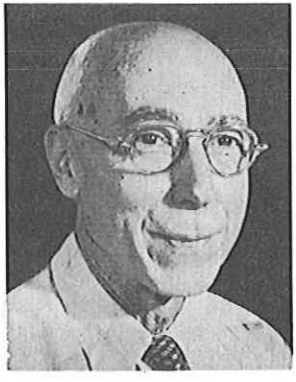
O. C. Cash was a regular contributor to the Harmonizer. He wrote a breezy column that was easy to read and easy to forget; it seems that Cash's attitude was: we're having a lot of fun here so let's not spoil it by thinking about it—it was an attitude that was shared by thousands of his barbershopping friends, for a bare handful in 1946 really took the Society seriously, or considered it a musical contribution to our cultural literature.

Some did though.

A lot of these men were leaders.

They realized that progress was essential and inevitable.

Deac Martin, a barbershopping patriarch, has long been the sharp needle, reminding Barbershoppers that although they are amateurs, their singing must be professional, their jokes clean,



Deac Martin

and their conduct above reproach. Through his regular column in the Harmonizer, Deac has prodded and pushed and reminded and scolded and edged noses out of joint with his observations, but his batting average of being right is pretty astounding.

Things were looking up all over.

The August, 1946 issue of the Harmonizer listed thirty-two new chapters chartered since April of that year. Charters were much easier to obtain in those days, and yearly dues were so low that they wouldn't buy two glasses of cheer at your local pub today.

In some areas, the organization was still a little loose.

And girls were getting into the act by busting the same kind of chords as the men, only pitched up a little, and this caused some snarling among the boys. The men were getting nervous, not only because the girls could sing well, but because the men were in danger of losing what they assumed was a private hobby.

They were right.

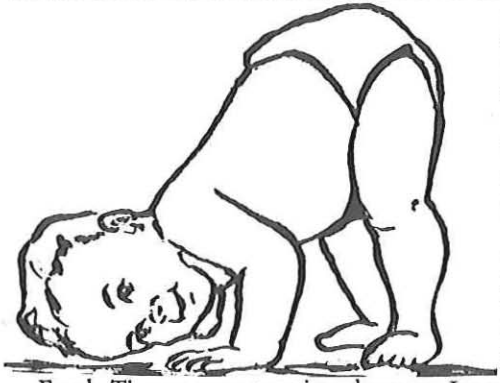
SECTION III

Contest rules . . . written arrangements . . . chorus contests . . . headquarters building . . .

. . . there'll be some changes made

Milwaukee was the 1947 Convention site and a few things were going to be different.

First, there were going to be five quartets in the finals; that was whittling the number down some, and the explanation seemed logical enough: they didn't want to bore the audience. In the Cleveland convention, the main criticism seemed to be that the audience came to "see some fun and the quartets were serious."



Shows you how the barbershop audience of today has changed. We're looking for champions, not to have the tenor hit the bass in the pan with a Boston creme pie.

Frank Thorne was stepping down as International President and he left his mark. Thorne made some strides in the contest judging program and, surprisingly enough, they had a rule that kept a member from singing in more than one quartet.

Judges were now working in four categories: Musical and Voice Arrangement, Harmony Accuracy, Voice Expression, and Costume and Stage Presence.

The Society now had a code of ethics with teeth in it.

And the members were shaping up, accepting a responsibility along with the privileges.

Frank Thorne believed that the best way to have fun was to cut out a lot of the nonsense. He believed that organization on all levels, and competent musical leadership, would build a strong Society.

He was right.

The women were still coming on strong. And there was a new name going around: *Sweet Adelines.* Not the song. An organization of women devoted to—you guessed it—barbershop harmony.

. . . some of the problems are still with us

Back at the ranch International was still wrestling with a method of getting chapter secretaries to answer their mail and treasurers to come up with their yearly dues.

Some chapters got themselves suspended and went right on singing, right on putting on shows.

The attitude of a lot of members was: International, who needs it?

Back on the farm, the president and his board were drawing together, tightening up loose ends, and opening new lines of communication between the International office and the chapters.

You could buy manuals now that told chapter officers how to do things. Music could be purchased so that members sang assured that their harmony was really barbershop,.

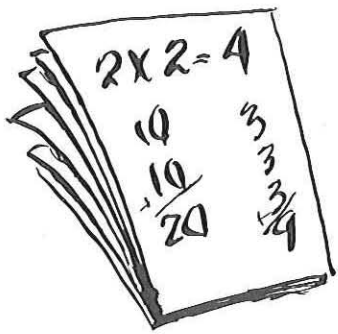
They trained judges so that the contests in the districts were more uniform.

And the harmony went marching on. The kick was the same. It was just taking on a little polish.

And this year's champion had the musical edge on last year's. The *Doctors of Harmony* did it in Milwaukee; they walked off with the International Championship, and to the judges' surprise, the quartet sang numbers arranged and composed by their tenor, Jumbo Smith.

And the *Serenaders* did it again, took second place for the fifth time.

Maurice Reagan, Chairman of the Judging Committee, held a meeting before the contest to make sure the judges knew the rules. Reagan, one of the fine arrangers and technical musicians in the Society, continually sought to refine the judging program.



Charles Merrill stepped into the International President's spot, and brought to International executive ability and sound musical background, for Merrill had already established himself as a top chorus director and arranger.

Like it or not, things were

moving along and the Society was gaining in members and in respect for its aims and performances.

Frank Thorne was still hammering away: "The success of our Society is dependent on the success of its chapters. The success of the chapter is dependent on the maintenance of interest in chapter meetings."

And all the while the songs kept pouring out, at the PTA meetings and the lodge clubs and on the chapter shows, and it was pretty good music.

. . . we started to recognize our public

Barbershoppers were changing their minds about one thing: they now cared what the public thought of them and quartets went out of their way to sing the things the public liked.

It was a rare thing now to hear a quartet, standing on a stage before sixteen hundred people, sing just the things that thrilled them the most.

Public Relations was a term you were hearing a little more of.

In 1947, International had in effect the following committees: Achievement Awards, Chapter Methods, Community Service, Contest and Judging, Districts, Ethics, Executive, Finance, Harmonizer, Inter-Chapter Relations, Laws and Regulations, Membership, Old Songs, Public Relations, Resolutions, Song Arrangements, and Ten-Year History.

A lot of committees, you say?

There were a lot of members, a lot of ideas, and the Society was growing, maturing.

Bill Diekema

The August 1947 issue of the Harmonizer contained the song: *Keep America Singing,* composed and arranged by Bill Diekema, an International Board member from Holland, Mich.

Frank Thorne captured the same sentiment in another song, also called *Keep America Singing,* but the Diekema version caught on and today the Thorne song is rarely heard.

International was getting into the mail order business. A member could buy, in addition to music and folios, lapel buttons, windshield stickers, SPEBSQSA license plate frames, celluloid ID badges, and a SPEBSQSA Zippo lighter.

Imagine that!

Deac Martin was complaining loudly about quartets losing the melody just so they could bust a ringing chord. Deac wanted quartets to stick with the melody, not change it so they could introduce a new chord.

Quartets howled about that.

But today you'd better sing the song. The judges are waiting for digressions from the composer's score and penalize for flagrant changes.

So there you are, everyone figuring Deac is wrong again and then it turns out that he was right.

Barbershopping, once confined mostly to the east and midwest, had spread out, with California blooming along, and Oregon sporting chapters. New members meant new problems and somehow International rose to the challenge.

. . . who's minding the store?

Barbershoppers, being human, had always demonstrated some very irritating characteristics. International dues increases were met with bellows of rage and suspicion. Some were so stupid as to believe that the headquarters staff lived in Roman splendor on the accumulated fifty cent pieces.

The truth of the matter was diametrically opposite. A glance at the occupations of nearly every International Officer—and they were all listed in the Harmonizer—immediately demonstrates that these men were all successful in business, and many wealthy in their own right.

They poured money like water into the Society and many carried it on their pocketbook for years while it struggled to support itself.

An International officer in 1947 not only had to have talent and enthusiasm, he had to have a nice bank balance to support not only his own hobby, but the hobby of those thoughtless ones who contributed little other than a big noise.

Oklahoma City was the convention site for 1948 and the all events book cost five dollars, American money.

Prices have gone up, haven't they?

There were a few new rules, firm, of course.

Quartets were forbidden to sing modern harmony numbers.

Each song had to end on a major or tonic chord.

The entrance and exit of the quartet were part of their stage presence.

Penalties would result from the melody being changed so that it couldn't be recognized.

A quartet did not gain points for writing or arranging their own songs.

An occasional chord, with the tenor below the melody, was permissible as long as it did not become characteristic.

Period costumes would not win points over uniform dress.

Some changes there. Things were shaping up. You really had to sing the songs right to win a contest.

Why not?

Membership was at twenty-two thousand and there were four hundred chapters.

Chester Gould, who created Dick Tracy, was getting it in the neck from Barbershoppers. He had a quartet called, *The Mumbles Quartet,* composed of criminals who sang at parties and swank affairs and then made off with the swag.

OOoooo, that made Barbershoppers mad!

One chapter secretary even wired Gould—he was that mad—and asked Richard Tracy to be his guest at their show, so that the cartoonist could get a real impression of clean-living Barbershoppers.

And Barbershoppers were knocking the *Sweet Adelines,* and all 'she' quartets. Some scathing letters to the editors there.

A lot of them were anonymous, but the Harmonizer never published a single one of them.

They didn't want it to become a trash magazine.

. . . our image begins to improve

And while all this was going on, men across the country were singing in the barbershop chapter choruses and things were

shaping up all over. A chapter could put on its show and not have it panned in the papers. Tickets were getting easier to sell, and a Barbershopper could talk about his hobby in mixed society without everyone putting him down right away as a nut.

Progress, it touches us all.

Some wag said, "Barbershopping is a swell hobby, and a hobby is something we go crazy over specifically, to keep from going nuts over everything generally."

Words to live by.

The pitchpipe technique was coming under close scrutiny in the February, 1948 issue of the Harmonizer, which leads one to believe that no one ever used one before. Quartets were warned not to start songs in the wrong key, and to avoid this, it is best to use the pitchpipe.

This brought up a technical matter, the necessity of knowing the key in which the song was written.

A burdensome detail for any quartet, you can bet.

There was also a little instruction in what key signatures were and where they were found on the written score.

Also there was a warning to quartets who try to sing everything in one key to avoid all these petty problems.

In all it was an illuminating article and certainly pointed up just how far Barbershoppers were from being musicians.

Singers, si! Musicians, *no!*

And all the while the Harmonizer was looking better and getting fatter and the Mutual Network was going to again broadcast the Medalists from the stage of Oklahoma City's Municipal Auditorium from 9:00 to 9:30 Saturday night.

They did, too.

This would be the most widely heard broadcast of barbershop music in the Society's history and the members were a little excited about the whole thing.

Hal Staab, chairman of the 10-year-history committee, was beginning to rub his hands together, and Deac Martin's labor of love was about ready to go to the printers.

This 10 year history, now out of print, was dispensed from International Headquarters and came into the hands of many Barbershoppers.

In the May, 1948 issue of the Harmonizer, O. H. King Cole, International Vice President, came out just as bold as you please and championed the cause of chorus singing.

He thought they (choruses) were a good thing and said so.

He thought they could be used on shows without hurting anything, particularly those splendid chaps who sang in the eight or nine quartets every show had.

. . . do you remember the four hour shows?

What were these shows like?

Sometimes four solid hours of songs that sounded alike, that's what they were like. Even died-in-the-wool harmony buffs blanched at the prospect of sitting through some of them.

The chorus was a handmaiden. Members sold the tickets, painted and erected the scenery and ran errands for that quartet in from Waxahatchie Junction.

Cole liked choruses on shows, chorus singing in the chapter, and it all must have cost him votes at the next election.

Carroll Adams moaned a little in the same issue about what a tough job it was at HQ. And he wasn't kidding. Four hundred and fifty chapters, seventeen hundred quartets and one hundred and seventy-five choruses.

Which proved that Carroll was indeed very busy and that each chapter didn't have a chorus.

Another man who shared much of the early administrative burden along with Adams was W. L. (Bill) Otto, who joined the headquarters staff in 1946. Bill began his barbershopping career in 1941 and was Secretary and President of the Pontiac, Michigan and Detroit Metropolitan Association of Chapters, an International Board Member, International Historian and is presently Assistant International Treasurer of the Society.

A quartet man of note, Bill had sung with three organized quartets, "The Cordinators", "Three-Corns-and-a-Bunyan" and the "Slumber Jacks", and is know affectionately as "the Society's greatest bass".

Bill, who has had his hand in almost every headquarters operation throughout his lengthy tenure as a staff employee, is

probably one of the Society's most versatile and experienced members today. He could well be called Dean of Society Historians and has received many honors for his diligent and constructive work at all levels.

Bill Otto

Jean Boardman, long a guiding light in the Society and certainly a man who always became involved in controversy, declared war on chapters who did not stick strictly to the man-type barbershop quartet on their shows.

Boardman, in addition to the many things he did not like, added: she-quartets, a three-woman-and-one-man-quartet, and a father-mother-and-little-son combination. He also disliked instrumental novelties, soloists, corny joke tellers, buck-and-wing dancers.

He was, in short, a man who liked his music straight.

And not too many paid attention because the knowledge was slowly penetrating that the public paid to be entertained first and to hear good barbershop second.

What they really liked was the growing professionalism, a thing Jean Boardman heroically championed for many years.

Deac Martin was again campaigning in his column for quartets and emcees to clean out all the double-meaning jokes.

Deac always yelled about that and he got through to the troops; today it is almost impossible to hear offensive material on a show. He didn't like dialect jokes, or jokes about the infirm, or about minority groups.

And he never once changed his mind about this.

SPEBSQSA was on solid ground and establishing itself more firmly in the musical community; serious professional musicians now knew who we were.

And the diehards who insisted that we keep everything woodshed were losing ground steadily and taking on the color of the right-wing lunatic fringe. Hard work from singing members and competent chorus direction were producing good music and, instead of frightening members away, it attracted more members, and of a better quality than before.

There'll Be Some Changes Made was being sung by Barbershoppers.

And they meant it.

In Oklahoma City, *The Pittsburghers* came off with the International Championship amid the howling and foot-stamping of thousands, while amid a quieter, more studied atmosphere, King Cole was a shoo-in for the presidency.

A folio of fifteen songs arranged by Society members was published and went out in July to all chapters which had paid all or part of their per capita tax for the new fiscal year.

For those who hadn't paid up, the book sold for fifty cents a copy and was one of the best buys ever offered by the Society.

In addition to the thirty-five songs published in loose-leaf form, this gave Society members a fair bit of music to sing, all of it top grade, and shows that followed were built around many of these pieces.

Quality in barbershop harmony was the usual thing now, not the exception.

There were other changes taking place, although no one seemed to notice particularly. Members were getting younger.

In most of the photographs of Society men running in the early Harmonizers, it was immediately apparent to the discerning that the hobby attracted men in their middle years. There were always a few young men, to be sure, but the bulk of the members were "getting on."

But this was changing. New men were joining. Young men who did not have that background of woodshed barbershop that dated back before the Society was formed.

They didn't need it.

There were choruses to sing in, directors to teach them, and good Society-published barbershop music to sing.

In no time flat they were as good as old Clyde who had busted chords in France in 1917.

In fact, *The Four Shades of Harmony,* the 1948 fifth place

Medalists, were nothing more than kids, if you listen to some of the older members tell it.

Yet this was an exciting change and no one could really deny it.

. . . let's pitch it up a bit

The old style barbershop bass who roosted all night on the low G and ended his songs on the low C was fading. Reason: they were just darned hard to find.

New things were happening.

Tenors were climbing and now and then you could hear one up there on the B flat and it was a thrill. The lead singer, no longer a baritone with a pretty voice, was singing up there where the old time tenor used to be.

The whole thing was being pitched up and there was a good reason for it: the male voice, having gobs of resonance, lacked brilliance, and by boosting the pitch a little, nothing was lost in resonance and a lot was gained in color.

The Detroit Chapter held a meeting where teen-age sons of members were specifically invited. They served potato chips, pretzels, ginger ale and Pepsi. And they sang barbershop harmony.

As the twig is bent, they say.

George Campbell, in voicing his comments about the Oklahoma City convention and barbershopping, said, "I think Cash would admit that it started in fun, and it is still great fun, but it ain't funny NOW. A few years back, mentioning to a friend that you were a member of SPEBSQSA got a laugh. Now the guy wants to join."

Elmer Peterson, editorial writer for the *Daily Oklahoman,* said, "Even deeper than the secret desire of men to sing in harmony is the significant trend toward reviving the art of self expression."

How about that?

Barbershoppers were hearing a lot about the Reagan Clock System and the Bach circle of fifths and in the Harmonizer there

appeared a bit of explanation by Frank Thorne who spoke of the dominant chord, and the super-tonic.

Like it or not, Barbershoppers were going to get a musical education, for as any old trumpet player will tell you, you can get away with "ear music" just so long.

Meanwhile, the city of Buffalo, New York was selected as the next convention site, and International Headquarters changed addresses, moving to a larger building that would house the ten full-time employees.

And the ten year history, *Keep America Singing,* was on the verge of being published.

Frank Thorne, Chairman of the Contest and Judging Committee, came up with a swad of new rules for the 1949 Buffalo convention. The rules were getting impressive, tightening up the contests, evening them out, and producing better champions.

In Chicago, Patricia Vance entered a suit in Superior Court against the Society, charging bias and discrimination against women. The news services ate this one up, even though the judge threw it out.

Goofy people!

And in the meantime barbershopping had spread to Alaska and Canada and Guam and Hawaii and Barbershoppers were still picking on the chorus, saying that it had to go, and others were taking an "over-my-dead-body stand".

Barbershoppers were having fun everywhere.

Some of the quartets moaned, but they sang under the rules and sang better because of them.

Deac Martin's ten year history of the Society came off the presses and went for two dollars and fifty cents a copy, but not like hotcakes. Every Harmonizer columnist was giving it the big pitch, which it deserved, for it was well written, good reading, and beautifully bound.

But Joe Barbershopper just wouldn't come through in the numbers expected then. Yet today, it's a collector's item.

Even Barbershoppers, now and then, could act like schnooks.

The big thing for the Buffalo convention was the Chicago to Buffalo boat ride, seven wonderful days of cruising that ended in a financial nightmare.

Barbershoppers could learn the painful lessons as well as anyone else. The Society's road wasn't paved with rose petals, yet there are some who think so. A lot of members had to stop and pick thorns from their feet, but they moved on, always moved on, advancing, growing, swelling their ranks, and singing better and better.

And among the top brass there was some talk of maybe having an International Chorus Contest at one of the conventions.

Can you imagine the stares that guy got?

But the idea was there, just the same.

The Mid-States 4 from Chicago charged in there and took the International Quartet Championship after steadily progressing through the medalist ranks.

The International Conventions were now huge affairs with thousands in attendance; each year they seemed to grow larger, get better, attract more non-Barbershoppers. They were a boon and a blessing to the cities in which they were held.

Barbershopping was big business.

And the total membership was growing.

Each issue of the HARMONIZER listed new chapters formed.

They never listed the ones that folded though. And they did, but more sprang up. More came into being than folded.

In 1949 each member was paying International the staggering sum of three dollars a year in dues. This money was broken down as follows: HARMONIZER got one dollar and six cents of it. Salaries took eighty-eight cents. Rent and office upkeep gobbled another thirty-two cents. Telephone and telegrams latched onto eight cents. Printing and mailing took thirty-one cents. Travel, a dime. Officers and committees, sixteen cents, and miscellaneous the final nine cents.

Book II, Songs For Men rolled off the presses, 18 new arrangements suitable for quartet or chorus.

The music library was expanding steadily, with a good deal of it composed and arranged by Society members, a simple device to escape copyright infringement since song publishers were reluctant to release material for barbershop arrangement.

In the span of years, much had changed in the Society. The attitude of members was no longer quite as casual as it had once been. Nearly every chapter officer was in some way aware of the fact that his chorus couldn't sing badly in public and expect to attract a crowd.

Chorus directors were not only taking a little pride in their craft, but were even perfecting a craft and passing it along. Leaders in this field were becoming evident, and assuming more importance.

In the older issues of the HARMONIZER, it was not hard to find, even in Frank Thorne's chapter, singing engagements filled by quartets made up on the spur of the moment by four chorus members.

Statements of these accounts grow increasingly rare because the quality of the average local singout quartet is quite good today, and certainly a cut above the best of the old-time pickup chapter groups that did the bulk of the entertaining.

. . . we were casually organized in the mid-forties

It is difficult for the present day Barbershopper, the three-year-old member, to visualize the incredible casualness of chapter activities in the mid-forties and early fifties. You had to see it, hear it, and listen to what we enjoy now to believe it.

Personal recollection goes back a long way in this field of four-part harmony. The writer's father, Shubel S. Cook, who sang tenor in the old *Maple City Four*—and those who were around from 1934 to 1939 may remember it—originally joined the Schenectady, N.Y. Chapter when International Vice-President Art Merrill organized that chapter.

An older brother, Henry Cook, served as president of the Reno, Nevada Chapter in the mid-forties, while Shubel Cook and two other sons, Alfred and Raymond, served in the Middleburgh, N.Y. Chapter, organized in 1947. The Cooks sang in a quartet called *The Driftwood Four,* a good quartet in its day but a casual one by present standards.

Barbershopping was fun in those days, but not as much fun as it is today. It can be truthfully said that it was frustrating, because these men had the ear to hear when it was wrong, or not quite right, and it was more that than anything else.

Chapter meetings were casual, disorganized, and the member really didn't learn very much. The early members brought barbershop harmony to the Society from past experience in quartets, mixed and otherwise.

Today, the Society and the chapter bring barbershop harmony to the uninitiated. We are, today, finally doing our prime job, of preserving the harmony by passing it on to people who could not have possibly learned it any other way.

1950 and Omaha, Nebraska for the International Convention, and the board of directors was already wrestling with the problems of an expanded Society.

They wanted a one dollar increase in the per capita dues, which set up a howl from Maine to California.

The army wanted three quartets to go to Europe and Asia to entertain troops and the call went out for International semi-finalist rank or higher. The army would pick up the tab.

This was a major breakthrough.

The Society was saddened by the death of Hal Staab, Past

International President and contributor of some of our most enduring original musical compositions.

Fred Stein, bass of *The Four Harmonizers,* died in Chicago. He had a varied and extensive career in professional quartets before joining the Society.

President O. H. Cole was disturbed because of the number of suspended chapters; the mortality rate was four times higher than normal.

There was considerable discussion about that and what to do about it.

In the March, 1950 issue of the HARMONIZER, Carroll Adams had an article: Why Do Chapters Fail?

He had some good answers but no one did much about it.

. . . charity performances kept us in the newspapers

Newspapers were paying a lot of attention to the doings of Barbershoppers; their shows made good copy and the pictures of quartets were colorful, eye catching, and all this helped promote membership and sell tickets to public performances.

Meanwhile Barbershoppers were singing up a storm, donating proceeds to charity and doing a large-scale public service job.

Because that's the kind of guys they are.

Songs For Men, Book III was published and the 1944 Champions, *The Harmony Halls,* departed for Europe for a four week tour of military installations and hospitals.

The Toronto Globe and Mail said: "They toot on a pitch-pipe, tune themselves as if they were a violin and proceed to hold onto their pitch through thick and thin. These boys can sing! They are a long way from the fumbling amateurs the name of the Society might lead one to imagine they would be."

The Santa Monica, California, *Outlook* said: "The harmony cultures us, it refines us, it soothes us, it makes us love everybody."

This is the kind of spontaneous praise Barbershoppers work for.

We don't want to be hicks gathered around a lamppost.

We never did, but it took a lot of singing through a lot of years to prove it.

The late F. Stirling Wilson became a contributor to the HARMONIZER; a man of keen insight and gay nonsense, Wilson covered his most serious points with wry humor, but now and then this fails to blunt the bite.

Canadian music critic Ronald Hambleton spoke the truth and drew blood when he accused the Barbershopper of being a musical snob.

Protests rose mightily but the thoughtful smiled and knew how true the statement was, how jealously the Society guarded its musical format, how devout the Barbershopper is, and how condescending he is to other musical forms.

Time has changed this somewhat, but Hambleton scored a direct hit.

1950 was certainly an exciting year, and more was yet to come.

Jerry Beeler of Evansville, Indiana took office as the new International President and the Society was steaming ahead to find a building all their own since they outgrew space as quickly as a six year old outgrows his shoes.

In Omaha, the *Buffalo Bills,* from Buffalo, N.Y., broke the magic chain and became champions without first becoming medalists and ascending gracefully to the throne.

This sent a few quartets back to the old drawing board.

The reason being that this was the first time any quartet had come forth with a big, professional sound, and it hurt a little to admit it.

Harmony historians mark the big turning point in quality with the *Buffalo Bills;* they gave other quartets something to follow they never had before.

This can be said, be a fact, without distracting one whit from the performance and enjoyability of prior champions. Improvement was expected. It had happened all along.

The *Buffalo Bills* just made it one great big hop instead of a graduation.

And Carroll Adams was reminding the districts that members of quartets had to be bonafide members of the Society and that the quartet had to be registered for the current year.

Sounds silly, doesn't it?

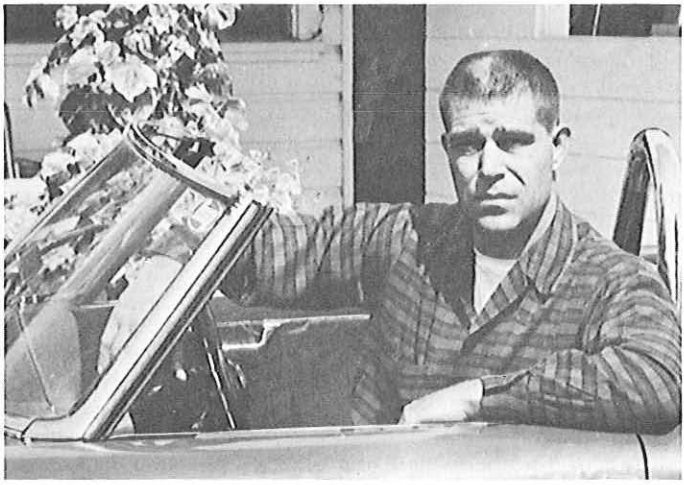
But things were still a little loose in 1950.

In the financial statement issued by HQ for 1950, they were eking by on a total revenue of $87,593.79, and considering the work load, the programs in effect, and the services they were committed to render, it is amazing that they could do half of what they actually did.

The Society, like every other organization, never did have enough money.

And probably never will have.

Author Cook Dies Suddenly



Barbershoppers, especially those who were reading his serialized account of our 25-year history, "Melodies For Millions" in the Harmonizer, were shocked to hear of the sudden death of author William E. (Bill) Cook. Bill was stricken by a heart attack immediately after he finished directing a Sweet Adeline performance in Napa Valley, Calif. on July 23rd.

Cook was 43 years old at death, but those who knew him intimately agree he crammed many years of living into his short lifetime. He had an amazing background of occupations and hobbies which started when he was 19 and flying bombers to Britain for the Canadian Air Force. He was later critically injured in the Philippines while serving in the U. S. Army. Following the war Bill worked as a transport truck driver, salvage deep-sea diver, boat builder and sailor, woodsman, Alaskan guide, Black Belt Judo instructor, nite club bouncer, motorcycle and sports car racer and a Deputy Sheriff.

Professionally, Bill was a writer and wrote under the names of Will Cook, Wade Everett, James Keane, Frank Peace, and Paul Thomas. Two of his books, "Two Rode Together" and "Quincannon Frontier Scout", were made into movies. His books had wide circulation in this country and in Europe, where his Western stories were particularly popular.

But above all, Bill was a Barbershopper. His interest in barbershop harmony dated back to his youth while he was growing up in Cambridge, Ill. He was Director of the Vallejo Chapter, organized and served as Chorus Director of the Napa Valley and Clear Lake Chapters and just recently assisted in the formation of the new Ukiah, Calif. Chapter. Beside Napa Valley, Cook also directed other Sweet Adeline choruses.

By nature Cook was a "stem winder" and was never able to settle for anything less than maximum effort in any activity in which he became involved. Writing our 25-year history was a vast undertaking, an assignment which Bill had taken on voluntarily. Only because of his intense devotion to Barbershopping was he able to leave a lasting testimonial to help fill the void in our Society created by his passing. "Melodies For Millions" will remain with us as a monument to his memory. **(At this point Charlie Wilcox, veteran Society member from Freeport, Illinois, was called upon to finish Cook's unfinished work. Fortunately, Cook's voluminous notes were prepared well in advance and found intact; Wilcox was able to put them to good use in writing the balance of the history.)**

. . . and some suggested an international chorus contest

Like the matter of an international chorus contest; that matter did pop up at the meetings, like it or not.

And now and then they picked up another man who thought it was a good idea. Year by year, if they lasted, they were going to win a majority.

Some felt so anyway.

F. Stirling Wilson was getting a few raves over his first column in the HARMONIZER; his second was already in print so it figures that the editor had decided not to wait.

And a keen-minded chap wrote in to ask why the Society didn't make a movie of its history. A great idea but who'd pay for it?

There were also a few isolated squawks about district champions defending their titles. Some felt that if you'd won it once, you should quit and give someone else a chance.

In Omaha they had a chorus directors' session where Carl Jones, Frank Thorne, Hugh Wallace, Captain Copeland, Dick Svanoe, and Rudy Hart gave splendid demonstrations. The most important thing to come out of the meeting was the emphasis placed by the men themselves on the necessity of keeping in

touch throughout the year, exchanging arrangements, etc. District Chorus Contests were discussed and the possibility of an International Contest was touched upon.

Gaining ground, wasn't it?

Back at the plant, Barbershoppers went on singing, making their contributions to their communities.

What contributions?

The Waterville Maine Chapter raised three hundred dollars for three families who lost their homes in a fire.

The Westfield, Plainfield, and Newark, N.J. Chapters teamed up to raise over nine hundred dollars for medical expenses for several high school pupils badly hurt in a car crash.

Guide Dogs for the Blind got the proceeds from the Berkeley, California show.

In Abilene, Texas, the chapter turned twenty-five hundred dollars over to a child welfare fund.

This can go on and on.

Barbershoppers have big mouths.

Big hearts too. Bigger than their mouths.

And it's always been that way.

The Society printed up and passed out a Quartet Manual in 1950 and because they forgot to stipulate how many men are in a quartet, Deac Martin devoted a column riding the clowns who fifth wheel.

You know, they still do that. Some never learn.

Christmas time was rolling around and Toledo, Ohio was the next convention city; they always geared up for these things early.

In Corpus Christi, Texas, they kicked off a fifteen minute weekly radio show over station KUNO, called: Barbershop Harmony Time, and done live by the chapter chorus and three quartets.

Charley Ward started a Share The Wealth column in the HARMONIZER in which he collected, edited, and passed on those little helpful hints to make your chapter meetings more livable, more fun, and it was hoped, more educational.

A few letters arrived on the editor's desk saying that they liked the September issue of the HARMONIZER. The rest were gripes. One didn't like the cover. Another complained because he wanted to go to a show to sing, not listen. Another pointed out that a member of the *Florida Knights* had his belt buckled left-handed and subtly suggested that he might be gay.

Wasn't so; the quartet member replied that it was just a habit.

Shadows on the wall: *The Schmitt Brothers* won the Land O'Lakes District quartet contest in November and were headed for International competition.

Toledo, Ohio was the place in 1951 and by February first, fifteen hundred all-events books had been mailed from headquarters.

. . . contest rules subjected to first re-write

The International Board of Directors put their OK on changing the judging rules some. Stage Presence now counted for 20% of the score instead of 10%, and all the quartets were being judged in five categories, the old Harmony Accuracy and Blend being split into two categories.

In the past, a quartet that did not stick to barbershop harmony was penalized by the arrangement judge.

Under the new rules they were disqualified.

Then there was always someone who had to come along and get the Barbershoppers stirred up, like Don Freeman of the *Louisville Courier Journal*, who wrote: "For better or for worse, the Gay 90's are always with us. . . With its falsetto tones its falsetto feelings, its peculiar harmonics, its 'boom-baums', and 'lady-less', barbershop singing gets slightly monotonous. Traditional tunes like *Sweet Adeline* and *Sweet Genevieve* rank, in our opinion, only a notch above singing commercials. And when the barbershop style is applied to the pensive *Mood Indigo* and some Southern melodies, it strips them of their original charm. The closing selection was *Keep America Singing.* That's a message that should be highly qualified."

Oooooh, that smarts!

And what made it smart was that nearly all clear-thinking Barbershoppers recognized grains of truth there. Even the devout Barbershopper winces at a poor quartet. Even a devout Barbershopper grows dulled by the eleventh ballad sung on a quartet parade. And thinking Barbershoppers do not even attempt to sing songs that do not lend themselves readily to the barbershop style.

Whether Freeman was right or wrong mattered little. What did matter was that he criticized our music, and Barbershoppers will not stand for that, and certainly from no one outside the cult.

However, the HARMONIZER editor got a lot of letters calling Freeman a liar so everyone felt pretty good about it.

While many were defending our cause, Deac Martin was penning an attack on those commercial souls who thought they

could use the Society, its reputation, its talent, for crass purposes, like making money with a commercially-sponsored quartet contest.

Deac, as usual, was cutting to the heart of something important. He was pointing up a choice that the Society chapters always had: taking the easy road or the hard one. There doesn't seem to be any doubt that by commercial sponsorship, each chapter could be financially well off, but Deac insisted that we would lose our character by compromise.

Our governing body has always felt this way and even though this play-by-our-rules attitude sounds unreasonable and stuffy, it has preserved us from harm, allowed us to walk through the valleys of commercialism unsullied, and given our champions stature that few professional quartets care to challenge.

Deac Martin is stubborn, often cranky, generally irritating, and 99% right.

And the membership knew it.

. . . O. C. Cash accused of "selling out"

In the June, 1951 HARMONIZER, Founder O. C. Cash's column was written by his daughter, Betty Anne, and Cash offered an attack of laziness as his excuse. Most members, knowing his sense of humor, accepted this, but a few thought that his health was failing.

Almost no one realized that it was.

Cash loved the Society, but it brought him a good deal of personal misery, besides costing him money. When he permitted the Society to expand along organized lines, many of Cash's friends, in a burst of unrealistic prejudice, accused him of selling out, and for a time he was very unpopular in his native state of Oklahoma.

It was a case of conclusion-jumping and it hurt Cash, but he rarely spoke of it and held no grudges.

International announced that the Chorus Manual, long in preparation, was now available. The booklet was a down-to-earth treatise on the whys, wherefores, and hows of organizing and carrying on a chapter chorus.

Everyone seemed to agree that the chorus was here to stay.

And Book IV, Songs for Men dribbled off the presses with something in it for everyone. Most of it was original composition, arranged by talented Society members.

The popular gripe in 1951 was afterglows and the mails ran heavy with heady-worded messages to the editor, who was run-

ning a poll. The consensus of opinion was that afterglows were a royal pain, but somehow they still go on, not changed much, still noisy, and pretty wet, and no one ever has sense enough to go home. And the gripe has become standard.

The Songs for Chorus book was published because some complained that while the other songs were nice, they were too tough for the chorus. This attitude in 1951 is remarkable because it illustrates how far the Society has come in the field of chorus direction. Today's chorus members can tackle a Medalist arrangement, and in the district and International contests, choruses do sing songs arranged on a par with what the best quartets sing.

. . . and in 1951 The Schmitts won all the marbles

Convention and Contest time: *The Schmitt Brothers* from Two Rivers, Wisconsin came off the top quartet and it's no secret that they were pretty well out in front all the way. Fifteen judges, three in each category decided it, and no one who heard the contest really wanted to argue with their choice.

The September HARMONIZER carried a picture of newly-elected President, Jim Knipe, and his board of directors, all smiling happily.

And after conducting all the affairs on the agenda too.

In Jim Knipe's column he talked about the headquarters building, a dream of our leaders for some time. The fund wasn't really coming along too well; they had collected only fifteen hundred and fifty-two dollars and fifty cents, but they were still optimistic and were making sketches of what they thought it ought to look like.

The chorus directors' workshop in Toledo was a success, with forty-four directors present. Rudy Hart, Ray Jones, and Frank Thorne conducted, and they discussed several important phases of chorus direction and demonstrated methods of teaching.

The HARMONIZER ran a section called "Swipe Swap Shop" that was new and good and filled with musical advice.

Toledo was the biggest convention, with 3,201 all-events books sold. Paid attendance at the Saturday night contest did not come up to the Cleveland record in 1946, but the theatre was jammed.

Convention time is not a place for logic; it is a form of musical madness, with no one getting much sleep. Barbershoppers go on a harmony binge; they soak it up as though it were going out of style, rushing around lobbies to hear this quartet or that,

stopping on sidewalks and street corners to listen to swipe or tag; they are like demented bees, charging from flower to flower, simply overcome by it all, and a bit afraid that there won't be any more.

The woodshed room at the conventions was a big thing; that's where Barbershoppers go after they've listened until they can't stand it anymore.

The Schmitt Brothers did a spot on the Ed Sullivan Show and on the Arthur Godfrey Show; that was a nice way to win friends and influence people.

The Ted Mack Amateur Hour had been using barbershop quartets, and because of the popularity, continued to use them from time to time.

He still does.

. . . talk of a headquarters building continued

In the September issue of the HARMONIZER there appeared a drawing of the proposed headquarters floor plan. That must have looked adequate in 1951, but in light of what headquarters knows now, it just wouldn't have been enough room.

There was determination though to have a building of their own, and although it would be initially expensive, it would be cheaper in the long run.

And the building fund was pitifully small.

One of the hotter debates in 1951 was: Have choruses produced quartets? Has chorus singing generally held back the formation of quartets?

Carl Jones, who spoke from wide experience, and Jim Knipe, who spoke with the authority of the presidency, went to bat for the choruses and laid the ghost in Knipe's column. And in 1951 the *Buffalo Bills* did a jaunt in Europe while the *Mid-States Four* played the muddy spots in Korea and Marty Mendro even took his bass viol along.

The Cardinals of Madison, Wisconsin were in Alaska, whooping it up with the boys in the Malemute Saloon, and all the major air bases; all this was a part of the Armed Services Collaboration effort.

People had, by and large, stopped calling us SPEBSQUAWS.

They'd stopped laughing at our name, our songs, and the men who sang them.

J. Q. Public shelled out to attend our shows and contribute to the charities where Society people performed.

One look at the International budget was enough to convince

anyone who knew how to hold a balance sheet right side up that we were getting to be big business.

Beginning with July 1, 1952, all chapters had to have twenty members to retain their charter. New chapters chartering had to have twenty.

There was a howl over this, but it died quickly and everyone realized that the governing body had done the right thing to prevent chapters from deteriorating through lack of membership.

Kansas City was the scene of the 1952 convention and everyone was rubbing his hands, sure that it was going to be better than ever.

Cities who had hosted our conventions loved the ringing of the cash registers because Barbershoppers did spend money. Their booze bills never ran as high as some of the fraternal orders, but they were great eaters, great tippers, and they liked the best hotels.

And the Society kept on growing, getting fatter and a lot more sassy. Tell someone you sang in a district champion quartet and their eyes got as big as duck eggs; they didn't consider you a nut who wasted his time baying at the moon.

The chapter chorus manual suggested that chorus rehearsal be held on off meeting nights, or if this could not be done, to hold them before the meeting began.

Meetings were for fun: woodshedding, gang singing, business, and you name it!

The present-day Barbershopper would be aghast at this loosely-constructed chapter organization.

As Deac Martin said, "It depends upon the chapter. Some chapters may prefer chorusing all evening".

Actually Deac knew progress when he saw it but he still had that twinge of regret that things had to go and change.

But things were changing all over.

There was a judging program going now where candidates could put in an apprenticeship and eventually become certified.

International Headquarters was a clearing house for gripes and suggestions and information and it weeded out the junk and passed the gems on to the members because the Society was learning.

The chapters were learning.

Shows were coming off smoother because Barbershoppers had stopped singing in converted barns and letting Joe Hick emcee the show with his funny smutties and burlesque of the Society name and quartets' names.

They were learning how to manage money and talent and time and it just wasn't hard anymore to find a man with vast experience in show production or set design or ticket sales.

The Society was becoming the most concentrated hotbed of musical talent in the world.

barbershop goes symphonic

Down on the banks of the Potomac, important history was being made. For the first time, barbershop harmony was joined with a full symphony orchestra in a concert.

The place was Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C., where the Singing Capitol Chorus, directed by Dr. Robert Howe Harmon, sang with the National Symphony Orchestra.

It was a smash!

A new Song Book, the Staab-Hill folio, was released, containing eight of Hal Staab's original compositions, and arranged by John Hill.

And Deac Martin was at his very best, teeing off on loudmouthed emcees who have shot a lot of the Society's shows down in flames because they were pros, basically solo artists, and just couldn't give up the stage to anyone.

Things that made Barbershoppers see red: item in the New York Bronx Democrat: "Lady barbershop quartet tunes up for future competition in S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. contests."

Such uninformed items fanned a continually smoldering resentment in Society members, and who did they blame? The Sweet Adelines usually.

And the same thing happened to the women. They'd take one look at a misquote and scorch their locks.

Any implied affiliation between the two organizations brought down wrath from both headquarters.

The army still wanted more quartets, and to compensate the quartet personnel for loss of salaries, Society-sponsored shows and benefits and other fund-raising devices were employed to raise money. International, in charge of funds, also accepted contributions from individuals and chapters.

The military, paying for travel and lodging, did their part, but none of the trips would have been possible had not thousands of Barbershoppers ponied up to bridge that four to five week gap in earnings for the quartet personnel.

Understanding this, it is not impossible to see why International grew disenchanted with military cooperation at times.

Meanwhile, the armed forces quartet program still went on, with all the help and guidance the Society could offer. When

these quartets put in appearances at our conventions and shows, they were always given outstanding treatment.

Without knowing it, we had a future International Champion among them.

Betty Anne Cash wrote the founder's column in the June, 1952 Harmonizer because O. C. Cash had been in the hospital and didn't feel up to writing it. Few members were really aware of Cash's poor health, and he was not the kind of a man to burden others with his troubles.

Typographical errors, mis-spelling, dropping a letter from our rather lengthy name continued to bring down God-like wrath on the heads of editors and innocents alike, and any mention of female affiliation—well, you can imagine. Really!

And there was a barbershopping crossword puzzle in the HARMONIZER on page 37 . . . with the answers on page 53, for the guy who just had to cheat.

In going through the old HARMONIZERS it certainly is interesting to examine carefully the pictures of the quartets and choruses. There you will see future International Champions, perhaps not singing in the quartet that won, but in there singing, getting experience, learning their craft.

And that is what every Barbershopper is really doing, like it or not. And he learns or falls by the wayside.

The international convention was a jolt, a smash, the best ever, just as everyone thought it would be, and an Air Force quartet, *The Four Teens,* charged off with the championship. They had never before competed in international competition. Members of the Eau Claire, Wisconsin Chapter, they joined the Air Force together, sang together, and emerged Champions.

If anyone ever doubted it, this was proof that you didn't have to be sixty to sing barbershop harmony.

we took shaky giant steps

Ed Smith was elected to lead the Society onward, and no one doubted that this was our dedicated direction. Progress in all directions was moving rapidly, and a bit too rapidly for some. Certainly too rapidly for our limited finances and there was bound to be board action on a dues increase.

And that matter of an International chorus contest kept cropping up in the cloak room.

The judges met in Kansas City and certified seventy-seven candidates.

If that isn't a big step forward, what is?

There were some other steps being taken, like dad takes

when coming home at three in the morning, shoes in hand, trying to negotiate the stairs without waking the wife.

The masthead of the HARMONIZER was changing. slowly but surely. In 1952, Bob Hafer, who started out as an assistant to the assistant, became the business manager. In 1953, a HARMONIZER committee was formed and Bob was right in there, with Carroll Adams moved to chairman, a lesser post than he had held.

Robert G. Hafer

The job was simply getting too big for one man.

Jobs are sometimes like that.

O. C. Cash made the convention and was again, pen in hand, writing his column. He seemed recovered from his operation, but he talked about it in a joking way, minimizing the seriousness of it.

Those in Kansas City who saw him remarked later that he looked quite wan and worn, but the weather had been hot and muggy and most thought it was that because they'd felt pretty wilted themselves.

Many of the contestants were nervous backstage. Bruce Conover, lead of the *Vikings,* kept fooling with a coat hanger. Finally Bob Lindley, baritone of the quartet, said, "If you're going to take that on stage with you, we'd better get three more".

And when Air Force Colonel Peter Agnell heard that *The*

Four Teens had won, he flung his arms around the woman sitting next to him, kissed her and hollered, "Ain't that wonderful!"

Restraint is always commendable, but you won't find much of it at a barbershopping convention.

The district chorus contests were growing in popularity in 1952. Sixteen choruses sang in the Johnny Appleseed District contest with the Canton, Ohio Chorus taking the cake and the cookies too. And seventeen hundred Barbershoppers and fans gathered to hear them win.

So who says a good chorus can't draw a crowd?

The HARMONIZER is a great magazine, and it always has been. Few publications, commercial or otherwise, can boast such a continued publication without having fallen somewhere in limbo.

Not the HARMONIZER.

The articles have all been good.

But there was one article in the September 1952 issue that is so well done, so important, that it should be reprinted once each year until doomsday for all Barbershoppers to read. I refer to Jean Boardman's: AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

Boardman, never retiring when it came to taking up the sword in defense of the hobby he loved deeply and gave much too, came on here in a burst of eloquence never since duplicated. He defended our music, our singers, our ambitions, and our accomplishments in a manner that was concise, dignified, and completely honest. He does not once apologize for us, because we need make no apology to anyone, for what we are or what we do.

And while Boardman was doing great things, Barbershoppers everywhere were doing great things, singing for benefits and charities and working for their communities.

Few if any organizations do as much for their communities as Barbershoppers.

That's a fact and we can prove it.

Of all the non-profit organizations in the United States, the Society gets more lines of publicity than all the others combined.

And we don't have to disgrace ourselves to do it either.

The building fund committee under the leadership of Past-President O. H. Cole was not getting the response from the members; donations were slow. The committee was working on a new idea to present to the general membership, something that would produce results more quickly.

chorus contests catching on

Michigan District staged a chorus contest and drew nine choruses and a crowd of 2100.

The idea was catching on.

And then they did it! There it was, in the HARMONIZER. INTERNATIONAL CHORUS COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES CONTEST AT DETROIT CONVENTION.

The committee hastened to explain that the chorus contest would in no way detract from the quartet contest; there would be no limelight-stealing here, but it was going to happen and they'd laid down a few ground rules, like: not more than two choruses from each district could compete, and no chorus of less than twenty voices, with each member being paid up and in good standing.

It was new and, in many quarters, long awaited, and there was more than a little excitement connected with it.

Again quartets were taking the foreign circuit, with quartets in Japan, Korea, Austria, Germany and Alaska.

The Buffalo Bills drew the Orient and Phil Embury went along. In Japan they set up a barbershop clinic, invited men to sing, and with *I Had A Dream Dear,* and *Let Me Call You Sweetheart,* soon had a chorus going. That evening, with the chorus and two brand new quartets, they put on a show and left the audience clamoring for more.

In Austria, *The Cardinals,* along with Bob Hafer, now Associate International Secretary, set up a similar clinic, repeated the performance and put on a show.

Jerry Beeler and *The Clef Dwellers* played the German circuit, and following the same clinic-show format, scheduled six clinics.

Whether the military liked it or not, Barbershoppers were selling their product in the best possible manner, by getting people to sing.

Sixteen thousand people crowded the Yale Bowl in New Haven, Connecticut to hear a barbershop chorus and featured quartets.

Now if that isn't selling it, what is?

But that's one side of the coin. While all these wonderful things were happening, Barbershoppers were leaving the Society by the thousands and chapters were losing their charters, never to form again in many instances, and the officers were turning gray over it.

We were like flowers, dying and blooming anew, never the same bloom, yet not different from those whose petals had fallen. We were musical salmon, fighting our way continually upstream and there leaving a hideous toll of dead.

Our membership had grown to somewhere near thirty thousand and there it has remained, stuck there, neither retreating much nor gaining much.

And still we go on singing the same songs the fallen sang, and those songs thrill the new men as they once thrilled the men who are no longer members.

F. Stirling Wilson said, "Life can be harmony-or something". He meant it as a joke, but is it?

In March, 1953, The HARMONIZER celebrated by putting out a 15th anniversary issue and the per capita dues were increased by one dollar, a long-predicted and necessary move because of the ever increasing demand for services.

Experience has never been acquired without pain, and discipline at any stage of life has never been pleasant; yet the Society has gained both and thrived, grown, prospered while other organizations were split asunder and failed.

The Society had one thing going for it that prevented any serious and permanent fissure: the harmony. Men argued and disagreed and took sides and waged verbal war, and then they sang together and when they did that, they ceased being antagonists.

And it was not the actual physical act of singing together, for men many miles apart found themselves divided on issues. It was simply the harmony. The man in Kansas who sang his melodies felt the same healing balm as the man in Calgary.

We were from the beginning, the indestructible.

The first blush of enthusiasm for the new toy had waned, replaced now by a mature approach to our music, position, and conduct. In 1953 subtle changes took place and the fundamental structure of the organization was altered through the adoption of a new set of by-laws which (1) provided for a more democratic operation of the Society, and (2) provided proven methods for the conduct of the affairs of the Society, and (3) these changes granted chapters the power of referendum and the district officers had a voice in the making of the laws.

The House of Delegates was born.

And the HARMONIZER would now be mailed directly to each member instead of being handed out by the chapter secretary, when he remembered.

An era was drawing to a close, and reflection upon it reveals several interesting facets. The Society moved slowly, a succession of minute, faltering steps which often aggravated the eager and baffled the bold. But it is worth pointing out that no president in Society history had to spend his administrative year wiping out the mistakes of the man who had gone before him.

No basic policy of the Society has ever been changed except to refine and improve it, and the reason is simple.

We really didn't make many mistakes.

So there is some merit in thinking a thing over and hurrying cautiously.

SECTION IV

"The old order passeth giving way to the new . . ."

a transition period

An era ended at Detroit. No one present realized how sharply that end was being defined. The post-convention HARMONIZER carried wonderful stories and pictures of the convention. It also had a two-page eulogy, written by Deac Martin, for the Society's founder, O. C. Cash. He had passed away on August 15, 1953.

O. C. Cash was not a man who never changed his mind. Nor did he feel our Society should never change. He believed in progress when progress was in good hands. In his eulogy of O. C. Cash, Deac Martin recorded these words taken from Dean Snyder's Detroit Convention keynote speech:

" 'The old order passeth giving way to the new . . . It is evidence both of our vigor and our maturity that we could make this change so smoothly.' " (He referred to changes made in the Society and especially to the first meeting of the House of Delegates.) "He cited the many activities now possible to give outlets for the energy and interests of every member, including opportunities for craftsmanship in the technically musical phases of barbershop harmony."

Deac continues: "Afterward, when asked what he thought of the plans for the future, the founder said: 'They're sound; we'll keep on having good leaders'; this from one who in earlier years had felt, with many other seniors, that note singing was beneath the contempt of a *true Barbershopper,* but who now endorsed the technicalities of music as one of the things helpful to the Society's advancement thus far, and necessary for the future.

"Cash, who was the symbol of the preservation and encouragement of barbershop singing, had faith that its traditions will be passed along by a generation twice removed from his own, though just as actively interested and even more proficient within the Society. 'They won't let the Society drop what we stand for' he said".

new men, new quartets, first chorus contest

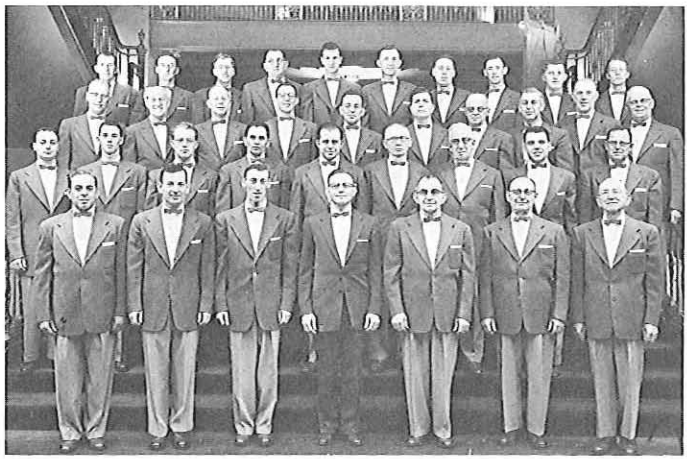
O. C. Cash was right; the new men would carry on . . . men like John Means, who had just been elected President.

And new quartets like *The Vikings* of Rock Island, Illinois who topped a starry field in Detroit. *The Four Chorders* of London, Ontario were 2nd. *The Sing-Copates* of Appleton, Wiscon-

sin came in 3rd. *The Antlers* of Miami, Florida and *The Statesmen* of Sacramento, California were 4th and 5th. They came from all over the Society, and a lot of them were too young to remember when the songs they sang were new.

The Mid-States Four were on hand with guitar and bull fiddle and not a soul said: "It ain't barbershop". But the conventioners knew more and more about true barbershop harmony.

They had to, for many were singing in choruses. Eighteen had shown up at Detroit for the first Convention Champion Chorus Contest. Scheduled for the ballroom of the Sheraton-Cadillac hotel, it became obvious as convention time approached that more room was needed for contestants and audience. The contest was moved to the Masonic Temple with the consent of the Executive Committee and it proved to be a wise move as over two thousand witnessed the competition.



Great Lakes Chorus, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Grand Rapids Michigan, with J. R. (Bob) Weaver directing, took the honors in a field of sixteen. "Q" Suburban of LaGrange, Illinois, with Dick Svanoe at the helm, was in second and Al Shields of Toronto, Ontario had the East York Chorus in third. Two had to cancel at the last moment: Montreal, Quebec and York, Pa.

The International Board met in Detroit too—sensed that not every Barbershopper was independently wealthy and thus de-

cided to pay travel expenses for the delegates to the mid-winter meeting.

O. C.'s rambunctious child was growing into a mature young man.

Means led musically and administratively

Ascending to the presidency, John Means noted that the symbol of the Society was now a memory. His task was to continue the memory and keep it green while maintaining the forward look of a man the Society revered.

Johnny Means was a rather large man with a long face and large even teeth, and a broad smile that inflicted deep dimples on each cheek. He had a broad, high forehead and thinning hair and a deep, abiding love of close harmony.

His introduction to our Society preceded his actually hearing a quartet sing. In 1945 he joined a group in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, where they were trying to organize a chapter.

John Means' joining the Society may have attracted no one's attention, but it was not long before his talent and influence were felt in nearly every field of barbershopping. As a judge he helped refine the rules and technique. As an arranger he contributed more than a score of excellent examples of the barbershop style. As a coach he had taken the *Schmitt Brothers* to the top. As an administrator he moved the Society along newly travelled paths which were to lead to far greener pastures.

Means had insight into the depth of the Society for one of his prime goals as International President was to try to develop in the minds of music educators a sincere and lasting respect for the Society's musical accomplishments. While there had been several helpful individual approaches prior to the following incident, Means attempted the first organized approach to attaining that respect on behalf of the Society. In the spring of 1954 he took *The Schmitt Brothers* to Chicago, rented a suite at the headquarters hotel of the Music Educators Convention and invited the Board of Directors of that national group to be the Society's guest and to witness a demonstration of what we were attempting to accomplish musically. This invitation was accepted and some twenty-eight music educators listened for three hours while Means explained Society aims, and *The Schmitt Brothers* (International Champions, 1951) demonstrated our musical ambitions and ideals. Following the thorough and detailed demonstration and discussion of our judging program, Means offered the Society's full cooperation with music educators and solicited their help in our efforts.

The demonstration indicated what the Society did *not* want as well as what it thought desirable, both musically and in stage presence. This made a tremendous and lasting impression which opened the doors for demonstrations in four of the five Music Educators National Conference regions, and two years later made possible a demonstration before thirty-five hundred teachers assembled in the auditorium at St. Louis, Missouri. Since the program with the Music Educators National Conference, the criticisms and condemnations formerly noticeably rampant have dissolved to an occasional personal expression of criticism, which, considering the individual circumstances, may be fully justified.

It should be mentioned that in the ensuing demonstrations, *The Orphans,* (International Champions, 1954) and *The Four Hearsemen,* (International Champions, 1955) also lent their services to excellent advantage. *The Tri-City Barbershop Chorus* from Moline, Illinois, under the direction of Bob Maurus, tenor of *The Vikings,* (International Champions, 1953) also served the program.

In 1954, four top music educators were invited to attend the Washington Convention as Society guests. They expressed amazement at our chorus and quartet activity and our musical accomplishments. Our stimulating hobby opened their eyes and sparked their interest. The Society owes a debt of gratitude to Miss Vanette Lawler, Executive Secretary of Music Educators National Conference for her support, as well as thanks to Max Kaplan, Harry Wilson, Dr. Howard Hanson and many others.

John Means, by his own confession, was not a professional musician, yet he enjoyed the reputation of being one of the Society's finest arrangers and judges. His administration was filled with progressive ideas well executed; John was a man who never lost his grasp on the 'big picture'.

It's hard to estimate the benefits derived from the demonstrations put on before the music educators in the early 50's, but there's little doubt that it helped give the Society a certain "respectability" it never had before. And some "musicians" were even joining the Society.

a "musician" looks at barbershopping

One was a Californian named Dave Stevens. Dave is a man in his middle forties. a bit of a ham when he has an audience, and he has been blessed with a plastic face which he contorts constantly while directing a chorus. Stevens is unique in that, unlike most of the Society's top directors, he came to barbershopping through the professionally trained ranks. Before the

war he received his Bachelors Degree in Music at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, and after the war he went to Northwestern for his Masters in music.

He got interested in barbershop harmony in 1950. He had a professional quartet and a radio show. The San Francisco Chapter, directed at that time by Bill Gavin, appeared to plug an upcoming show. Stevens doesn't honestly remember what they sang, but he did remember that he didn't think it was very good. He was judging them as a professional musician and was not at all interested in amateur groups, although he started directing the San Francisco Chapter that year. It wasn't until the Miami International Convention in 1955 that Dave Stevens saw the light, so to speak. But by that time he had, in his own words, wasted five years of a lot of other people's time doing what he didn't know much about. But let him tell it.

"It is evident now that all chorus directors have a built-in problem. Hired to bring about a higher state of musical excellence, they must in their own mind, make non-musical decisions. They must decide just what constitutes the 'fun' aspects of this musical hobby, and teach in a manner that does not dim or destroy this factor.

Stevens continues. "In practical terms, the chorus director, each practice night, asks his chorus members to master the most difficult musical instrument in the world: the human voice. Patiently he enlists the awareness of the member to the fact that it is just not enough to sing the right notes. They must be sung on the vowel, each tone matching the other. He must teach tone placement and the elongation of the tone. He must turn a weak singer into a strong one as well as develop the ear for balance and blend and the soul for appreciation of good dynamics. In time he may teach them to sing the songs because they are musical expressions, not merely notes and words on paper."

But is this fun?

It is a question that has plagued chorus directors since the days of Dr. Norman Rathert and will continue to be a problem. The difference, and perhaps the weakness in our Society, some feel, is that in a professional group poor singing results in a loss of job; in the Society the man is welcome to come back next week and make the same mistakes. So what's more important then, the music or the fellowship? Says Stevens, the professional ". . . actually the music has to be the thing that ties us together. In the chorus are men from different lines of work, different social status and they don't mix very much socially, which is to

say we don't find too many close personal friends in a chorus. Yet they're there on chorus rehearsal nights. They enjoy each other. The singing brings them, holds them, and the fellowship is a by-product.

"The Society has committed itself to a course of musical upgrading. It's the only direction of salvation, and perhaps our only course, but it's going to be frustrating. It's a matter of getting the enthusiasm, the need, the big picture, down to the guys who are in the chorus every week. How much does it mean to him? Can you make it mean everything? Every chorus director and chapter officer lives with frustration because they look at empty chairs and know that many absentees could have really made the practice. The big reason is that too many members just don't care."

"Barbershoppers should understand it is difficult for professional musicians to be good Society chorus directors because of the compromises one continually makes to preserve the 'fun' element. The chorus director often takes a view that is unpopular with the chorus, for the sake of the chorus, and if he is lucky, they eventually come his way."

another chorus director comments

Chorus directors are often selected casually, as a joke, on the spur of the moment, and in some cases it works out as a great decision. In the case of John Peterson, director of the Delaware County, Pennsylvania chorus, the Society gained a great teacher and a delightful personality. John Peterson is a man just under six feet, rather solidly built, with a smiling squarish face masking a sharp sense of humor. He has a drill-sergeant's volume when he needs it and complete grasp on his temper in all situations .

And like most men who joined the Society, John, as Dave Stevens, needed to be converted.

And, as with Stevens, it was what he saw and heard in music that turned him into a believer.

He found it difficult to believe that Bill Diekema and John Hill, both busy business men and accomplished musicians had the know-how of getting so much music from a chord of four notes. Then he got a real impression from Rudy Hart and his demonstrations of quartet and chorus singing at the Columbus, Ohio Convention. John Peterson, by then, was completely sold on barbershopping.

"Pete" lays no special claims to being an arranger but he feels a good directing technique is a necessity if you are going to get

the message over to the average Barbershopper. "You must" says John, "get the true story down to the average Barbershopper, convince him that good music is a part of his fun and enable him to sing rather than shout. Choruses are bound to play a role of greater importance in the future."

It is interesting to note that here were three men. John Means, Dave Stevens, John Peterson, just three of hundreds who lead the Society on at the beginnings of this new era following the death of founder O. C. Cash. These men devoted not only a lot of time but a lot of thought. Everything that came their way got a lot of observation and study. Means is gone—but the others are still doing it. Their opinions may occasionally take tangent courses, their conclusions cross, focusing attention always on the basic, half-hidden, little-talked-about problems that face administrator and chorus director: what to do for, and about, Mr. Average Barbershopper sitting out there in the chair.

SECTION V

"We shall render all possible altruistic service through the medium of barbershop harmony."

Between 1950 and 1954, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America lost ground. It lost a lot of members and a lot of chapters and the reasons were not obvious. International President Arthur Merrill directed F. Stirling Wilson, International Historian and a regular contributor to the HARMONIZER, to conduct a study of the situation. Both Merrill and Wilson, after sending out questionnaires to three hundred members, hoped to create a visual study, reducing the replies to comparative mathematics, but there were too many elements present, too many shades of opinion, and too many tenuous and impalpable influences.

The results of the investigation were fruitless; there was no constructive program initiated to solve this membership problem because the cause could not be effectively isolated. Some theories were advanced, and they were as fragmentary as the myriad gripes of the members answering the questionnaire.

Yet changes were made. The subject of ethics, which often came under constant scrutiny by Society leaders, was encompassed in a Code adopted in 1948. Fully aware that in the public mind, or at least in parts of it, the barbershop quartet was frequently composed of four drunks, the Society leaned backward to moderate this view, and erase it if possible. To win public acceptance of barbershop singing and to make its influence felt as a part of the American culture, the behavior of members must be above reproach in their public appearances. Moderation was the keynote.

The Society hit hard and often in its fight to stamp out off-color humor as used by some quartets and emcees. Constant hammering on this subject to men who were inherently decent had its result. The suggestive material has all but disappeared and every district has its own committee to guard the tenets of good taste.

The Society's Code of Ethics is not restricted to "keep it clean" and "keep it sober". It is an expression of the Society's aspiration to perpetuate barbershop harmony, by men of good character, for the purpose of having fun and rendering altruistic services where they are needed.

. . . we became a service organization

The Society is a service organization; it didn't start out that way, and had no planned program, but its stock in trade is entertainment, and service to the community. Its founder recognized these things in many of his utterances and it was this that gave him faith that, in spite of some dwindling of membership and loss of chapters, the Society would remain in good hands, find itself, and go on to its true place in the musical field in America.

At the Buffalo, New York International Convention and Contest in June, 1949, Lt. Colonel W. Austin Bishop, Chief of the Army Recreational Service, and Captain H. H. Copeland, Chief of Music Section, appeared before the International Board and requested the assistance of the Society in organizing Army barbershop quartets.

In a letter announcing this program, the Chief of Special Services stated: "This project will furnish a most worthwhile opportunity for soldiers to become associated with one of the finest types of American recreational music organizations. It will also provide a social relationship for military personnel with representative members of the local community and acquaint civilians at first hand with the fine quality of young men who make up our peacetime army."

International President O. H. King Cole appointed a national committee, with Dean Snyder of Washington, D.C. as chairman. In September of that year, Past President Carroll Adams gave four lectures to a group of thirty-five officers and eighteen enlisted men at the Special Services School, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. These men were sent as Recreational Officers to fifty-three posts in the United States and overseas.

Substantial progress was made in spreading the word throughout the services. Kits containing song books, records, issues of the HARMONIZER, and other materials went out to seven hundred and fifty military posts. "Bud" Arberg was largely responsible for all the musical material provided the military. By so doing, he made a lasting mark in the Society and even today we sing many of his fine arrangements.

Chapters of the Society were alerted to the program and those near military establishments sent blanket invitations to servicemen to attend chapter meetings and take part in the singing.

. . . we're in the Army now

In 1950 the Society began a series of overseas tours by leading quartets. The first of these flying tours was made by the Harmony Halls of Grand Rapids, Michigan (International Champions, 1944). Leaving Westover Army Air Base at Chicopee Falls, Michigan on June 16, 1950, the quartet was transported to a score of army posts in Germany and Austria.

Colonel Bishop, Chief of the Army Recreational Band, wrote Carroll Adams: "The Harmony Halls were enthusiastically received by the troops and made a very fine impression upon the command in terms of professional competence, enthusiasm, and attention to duty. Their work reflected the highest credit on the fine organization they represented. We are confident that the benefits which will accrue to our occupational forces from participation in quartet and chorus singing will convincingly justify this tour and encourage requests for other Society quartets to make similar tours." (And others did make tours: The Mid-States, Schmitts and Cardinals, to name a few.)

Later, however, it appeared that the program for overseas tours would have to be discontinued as a fundamental difference existed between the Society's thinking and that of the armed forces; neither faction seemed willing or quite able to understand the view point of the other. The Society felt that it was not only doing a morale building job for the armed forces, but felt that a secondary function was of a missionary nature. The Society believed that whatever entertainment value the quartets might have was accompanied by certain instructive elements by which the men could be introduced to the Society and the merits of self-entertainment with barbershop harmony.

The service officials, on the other hand, were generally not interested in the missionary side of the picture; to them the singing was entertainment only, and they perceived little difference between barbershop quartet singing and USO performances.

The Army's top brass could not see why the Society balked at having quartets sponsored by the USO. Society officials felt that it would not help the organization to be classed with dancing girls and uninhibited comedians, regardless of the appeal such acts might have for servicemen. Many members thought this attitude a bit puritanical, but the decision had been made and it was not changed.

The armed forces collaboration was a success, but like all things that succeed, it contained elements of failure, shadows of possibilities unrealized by both the Society and the military. The program was restricted by the Society's inflexible position in regard to its aims and ideals; it was certainly not furthered by the military's position. Yet it worked within this framework and worked well, and each emerged satisfactorily intact, and a large job had been done.

. . . the echoes grew fainter

The Society, always concerned about the size of its membership, has made somewhat of a fetish of it; nearly every program is in some way based on the assumption that if it succeeds, membership will either swell, or the quality of the present membership will improve. Surely there is nothing wrong with this, and if the exodus of the discharged servicemen, introduced to barbershop harmony and somewhat trained in singing it, flocked to the ranks of the Society, they would certainly be the better for it.

But it never happened and executives each year have been asking the same question over and over again: "Why don't we grow much beyond thirty thousand membership?"

Certain committees have studied this. One gave a report which included their definition of an ideal Barbershopper.

"If we could construct the ideal barbershopper", it said, "what would he be like? First of all, he would be a fanatic, a man who believed that barbershop harmony is the most important thing in life. He would be ready, willing, and able to sacrifice everything for his quartet. He would pass up meetings of other organizations: VFW, American Legion, Masons, Knights of Columbus, The Saturday Night Poker Club. He would never be a member of a church choir, a bowling team, a junior chamber of commerce man, a manager of a boys' baseball team, or a Scoutmaster or any of these things. He would realize that barbershop quartet singing is a demanding, full-time hobby, and rewarding in proportion to the time and effort devoted to it. He may be married or single, depending on the attitude and sympathy on the part of his wife. He might be a young man, without family ties to keep him from a chapter meeting or practicing with his quartet. Or he might be a middle aged man whose wife is occupied with her children or bridge club and lectures. Or he might be an old man with former ties severed and the leisure and desire to sing and work for his chapter."

The point in reviewing the report, far-fetched as it may be, is that it brackets the extremes some Barbershoppers have gone to in the enjoyment of their hobby. They don't last long for they are like engines racing well beyond their operational revolutions.

presenting . . . your International Champs

An International Champion quartet, past or present, can ask, and get two thousand dollars for a trip across the country, air of course, and have included their bed and board and the companionship of the chapter's best members during their stay.

That same quartet the next week will play for bare expenses at some chapter show or entertain free for charity.

The members of the average championship quartet are grand guys, and unbearable snobs who can look at the average chapter member as though he were a peasant who had not yet learned to hoe his row. They are the most gracious men you will meet, yet they now and then arrive late, hold up a show, give the show chairman and emcee fits, and appear at the last moment with the air that they were worth waiting for.

They are generous when asked for advice and will listen patiently and with sympathy to an unbearably bad quartet and offer excellent help and advice, and they will also clanishly remain in their dressing room until it is time to go on, and show no interest in the performance of the quartet preceding them.

Being an International Champion is difficult. It is trying for the man to be humble when every Society member "ohs" and "ahs" even at the way he blows his pitchpipe.

Yet every member of every International Champion quartet works hard at it, tries not to stand above the ranks from which he came, and the miracle of it is—they succeed.

There are always quartets that stand out for one reason or another, achieve a popularity that is not diminished or tarnished by time.

To any Barbershopper who has been around long enough to get his second year membership card from the chapter secretary, the Schmitt Brothers come to mind as the epitome of what is fine in man and barbershopping.

Joe Schmitt is a large man, quite stout, with a handsome, cherub face and he sings tenor with three brothers; he has enough to make up another quartet with a few left over.

It is not possible to talk to this man for five minutes without knowing that he is married and has many children, that he is Catholic, that he sincerely loves the world and the people who walk the face of it.

It is not possible to see Joe, Jim, Fran and Paul sing without realizing that before you stand four men who genuinely love each other, and because they do, they are capable of loving everyone in the audience. They are a quartet both beautiful to listen to and to watch because of their great personal warmth.

The question of what the Barbershopper is to do with his wife while he pursues his hobby has always been an important one, and Joe Schmitt was asked about this for two reasons: his quartet has been most active for many years in the Society, and he is a devoted family man. Somewhere he has reconciled these two factors.

"How does your family react to barbershop? This is a loaded question. The other night our wives went to a presentation that we made as a quartet and my wife's comment, after it was over, just fascinates me, and I must tell you about it. She said: 'You know, I'd forgotten how much fun it is to listen to you guys.'

"I think that my wife has always been extremely willing to participate in barbershop functions. She doesn't find that she particularly has a place in them. I think that I, like most husbands, have not been too excited about making her a part of this. I don't care to belong to her sewing club and I don't think she should belong to my barbershop organization. But she enjoys barbershop music."

Wives are generally very practical people when it comes to the husband spending a lot of time and money on his hobby; they are generally practical enough to put their foot down and make him curtail it or quit.

And any man who thinks they can't do this has either never been married, or if he has, not for very long.

. . . Frank Thorne, enigma

It would be impossible to record the past of this Society without further spotlighting Frank Thorne. The mention of his name stirred Jerry Beeler to a rhapsody of words which opened by calling "Thorne the greatest individual the Society ever had. Frank was a successful business man", continued Jerry. "He was wealthy. He was a perfectionist. He wanted a quartet and advertised in the papers, auditioned the men and had Roy Frisby,

lead; Herman Struble, tenor and Jimmy Doyle the baritone.

"Four weeks they worked in Frank's home in Riverside, Illinois, perfecting the arrangements Thorne had made. They entered the contest in Grand Rapids in 1942 and won it—the first time out.

"Frank put the purse of his business behind the development of the Society and made it possible to engage legal talent that figured out our constitution and by-laws and otherwise established us on a sound foundation."

. . . others comment on Thorne

Rudy Hart of Michigan City, Indiana, certainly one of the great musical talents in the Society and director of an International Champion Chorus, as well as brain truster of some of the Society's most effective and advanced programs to up-grade the music, remembered Frank Thorne:

"Frank was a top-notch musician and arranger and loved both chorus work and quartets. Carroll Adams, Jerry Beeler, Frank Thorne and Maurice Reagan, to me, are four of the most important men the Society had. The first two kept the Society moving administratively and had the respect of all members. When it came to helping chapters, they were diplomatic without ever offending anyone.

"As for Frank Thorne and Maurice Reagan, they impressed other musicians with their tremendous knowledge of close harmony and how to bring out the best performance. Frank Thorne had a rapier tongue but was respected because of his knowledge of barbershop harmony and his hand was always extended to help anyone who asked."

Before his untimely death, Will Cook wrote of Frank Thorne and some of the men around him. He summed it up this way:

"There are few Barbershoppers today who realize the abilities of men like Frank Thorne, Maurice Reagan, Willis Diekema and Phil Embury. Today a man joins the Society and sits down in a chorus under a good director and in a few weeks is singing his part on some pretty highpowered barbershop music. A year later, if he desires, he can be singing in a good quartet, which has taken advantage of the many facets of instruction offered by the Society. The member can read the Arranger's Manual, The Barbershop Craft Manual, the Quartet Manual. He may have taken advantage of the Harmony Education Pro-

gram (HEP), conducted in various key locations around the Society, and be taught by the most gifted and informed men in the Society.

"He can do all of this, yes, even place well in district competition without knowing a whit about barbershop harmony and what it really means. He may go quite some time before he meets the likes of Thorne and the others mentioned, men who could sit down in front of a quartet and after having sung a song twice, *write* the score without recourse to a musical instrument.

"These men did not scorn the written arrangement, and neither did they rely on it for every note they sang. They were quite capable of putting a song together, in a most inviting style, using only their ears to tell them where the next note should be, and what the next chord should sound like.

"Does it sound like we're going backward?

"In a sense, we need a return, but it is a step that will most likely not be taken for we are moving too fast to stop and retrench. Today, both quartets and choruses sing in championship manner without having gone through that period where music was good to sing and yet sounded bad.

"Expressions used commonly by most chorus directors: 'Sing on the line . . . on the vowel . . . tone placement . . . head resonance . . .' they would have left Frank Thorne wondering what you were really talking about.

"Old timers regret the passing of the 'ear singer', and they have a point, but only for a limited application, the barbershop quartet, and then only to a certain degree of professional excellence.

"It has been proven that a written arrangement, where the arranger has had time to study his work, to revise, to think out his harmonic patterns, is certainly superior to one put together by four men singing and memorizing passages as they go along.

"We've been shown that a note reader, in the long run, will out-sing the ear man, and with a higher degree of accuracy.

"We need no further proof of these things; we accept them and a chorus learns to sing with music in their hands. Whether or not they are missing something can be subject for endless argument, but chorus directors as a rule have no intention of going back to the pure root system. And Barbershoppers, by and large, have no desire to sing that way.

"Woodshedding, as Frank Thorne knew it, is becoming a lost art.

"I wonder what he would say about that."

. . . golden threads appearing

The question as to what Frank Thorne might have thought of newer styles of woodshedding should not be too difficult to answer. He was a good musician and in his own quartet were men of the same caliber. We think Frank would approve of all the advances the Society has made in its musical stature. He and John Means were musicians and business men. They came along at just the right time in the Society's history.

Thus it has been since the night O. C. Cash and Rupert Hall placed their own golden threads on the loom of our history. Each year has found new threads of gold being added. The fabric widens as we go along and gradually spreads to encompass thirty thousand. It must someday accommodate 50,000. Not every golden thread will be recognized as we march on. Many who have done great things for us slip into place silently but have done their part to strengthen and beautify the path for us. The pity of a history of this kind is that so many cannot be singled out and given the credit due them. Time and space do not permit.

Many remember for instance—Charles Merrill, Past International President. The September, 1954 HARMONIZER, reported a speech of Merrill's containing the following: "What do we (Barbershoppers) have? We have this: the power to stir men's souls through the medium of music to a degree seldom, if at all, known elsewhere in the entire field of music. It is the medium of *participation music.*" One sentence out of a speech—but it is the golden thread which supports our Society.

. . . we picked up the loose threads

While quartets were singing overseas, at home things had been grinding steadily along. From issue to issue the HARMONIZER was telling of events and personalities shaping new forms and patterns in our regal carpet. Let's look over some of them.

John Means brought out a portfolio for new chapter presidents. We issue a volume these days and hope the prexies will read it.

Sig Spaeth, member and musician, was deploring the use of songs without giving proper credit to composers. It is still a good idea . . . to give credit.

President Berney Simner was asking for a return to "pure barbershop". This has popped up many a time and now we need a definition for "pure".

In December, 1954, the "Orphans" stepped from a plane in Albuquerque, New Mexico to meet a large, wildly cheering crowd. Their perplexity vanished when Adlai Stevenson stepped out from behind them and acknowledged the cheers!

The Board, at the mid-winter meeting of March, 1955, at Louisville, Kentucky decided there would be fourteen choruses in the contest and two could be from Canada.

One chorus from a district. No director to direct more than one chorus and no member in more than one chorus. (That sort of calmed the slippery pro who jumped from chapter to chapter.)

A committee was to be appointed to plan a Society-wide program to stimulate quartet singing among school-agers.

Plans for headquarters building were still a-drafting.

Registration fee for quartets went from $1.00 to $2.50!

Sig Spaeth picked up the bone tossed out by Deac Martin and was pleading for less intricate swipes and tags. Bud Arberg gave both of them an assist. It seemed that none of these fellows believed in coloratura tenors or leads.

In May of 1955 Berney Simner and International Secretary Bob Hafer decided to find out if the Far Western and Evergreen Districts were really out there. They found both places green and teeming with activities. Bob even took in a bit of Canada both West and East. That was good for everyone.

The "Jungle-Aires" of Panama Canal Zone, flew 2089 miles to get to Dixie Preliminaries at Memphis, Tenn.

In June of 1955 Sigmund Spaeth resigned as a HARMONIZER contributing editor. It was his 70th birthday. He promised continued interest.

In the same month our musical stature rose with a "Balance and Blend" slide film that won a Recognition of Merit Certificate from The Film Council of America in the education category.

It was a year for recognition. Maurice Reagan, exponent of the clock system of chords and everybody's friend, was written up by Acker Petit, staff writer of the "Pittsburgh Press", under the title of "Mr. Barbershop Harmony."

Bob Hafer announced that, "ordinarily, parades and contests, staged by Society Chapters in the U.S., are exempt from Federal Admission Tax, providing annual exemption is sought." Headquarters reminds secretaries every year . . . and some still don't get it. History repeats itself?

cators National Conference was gaining broader acceptance within both the Society and the ranks of the Conference. The Society's brochure entitled "A Music Educator's Introduction to Barbershop Harmony", had been fairly well distributed and favorably received. The Board approved plans to participate in the MENC 1956 meeting.

John Means' plans were working.

After conducting all that dry business, the delegates found Miami's hotels just right. The quartet contests won over everything though; even a few showers which dropped in to refresh everyone. A post-convention steamship trip closed one of the greatest of Society conventions.

The September, 1955 HARMONIZER reported that Munson Hinman, Salt Lake City, had informed theater men who wanted to promote movie house barbershop quartet contests that the Society would not sanction any commercial exploitation of "our amateur and non-profit hobby".

It was learned that Charley Schwab, tenor of the 1943 champions, "The Four Harmonizers", had died of a heart attack August 2nd.

December of 1955 saw the first of the Harmony Heritage Songs series on the way. This series of songs was made up of "oldies" in public domain.

The Hartford, Conn. Chapter passed the $50,000 mark in raising funds for charity.

Andrew B. Sterling, lyricist of "Wait 'til the Sun Shines, Nellie", "Hello Ma Baby", "Meet Me in St. Louis", "My Old New Hampshire Home," died in Stamford, Conn. August 11 (1955).

All the while plans were being made for the annual convention to be held in Minneapolis, Minn.

. . . bring back those good old days

Attendance at any International Convention soon points up the fact that musical and administrative domination is the province of younger men. As far as the old timers are concerned, these men came into barbershopping late, some as late as 1956 and 1958, yet they quickly pushed to the fore in both talent and desire to serve.

Somehow it proves that a man can 'get there' without having started so far back, and that there is another route to barbershopping success other than twenty years of woodshedding.

Val Hicks, of Salt Lake City, Utah, is an example of the young, talented men who dominate much of our Society's pro-

gramming and planning. Val is a short man in his thirties, blond, with a pleasant, smiling face and a very soft voice. He is not an easy man to know because he would rather answer a question by asking one, and this gentle, probing manner may be irritating to some. Such men should be listened to for they teach others how to think.

In the Society, where a sharp division exists between performers and teachers, Val Hicks is a teacher. He sang, in the past, in quartets, and has a fine voice, but he really sings very little today.

His primary role is teaching, and he is certainly qualified, being a category specialist in the arrangement category.

Val Hicks says: "I first became acquainted with barbershop in 1948, when I was in the 9th grade; I had just completed my junior high school. I had formed a quartet in the ninth grade and the glee club director told me that a group of barbershop singers was meeting at the Boys Club once a week and since I was interested in quartet singing I ought to drop around and visit them. So I did and this was my introduction to barbershopping, although I didn't become a Society member until about 1953. I always wanted to become an arranger and when I began my college training I enrolled in some music courses at the University of Utah Music Department."

He also studied under Dr. Alexander Shriner, who is the organist at the Salt Lake City Mormon Tabernacle, and Dr. Helen Forman, who teaches voice. Val then made a statement that should be absorbed through all the pores of those who wish to be top-flight Barbershoppers:

"I *sought* this training *because I realized that before I could be an arranger or a quartet coach or judge or a chorus director I needed some formal musical background* on which to *build my barbershop knowledge.*" (The italics are ours.)

Val Hicks says his first success at arranging for a big time quartet was for the "West Coasters" in 1957 when they sang his arrangement of: "When I Leave the World Behind" at the International Contest and came in second. That particular version was put on one of the Medalist albums. Since then it has become fairly popular throughout the Society. He also arranged for the "Gala Lads" (International Champions, 1962) and the "Bay Town Four" (fourth place International Medalists, 1960 and 1961).

. . . ye who have eyes to read and ears to listen

Val had this to say about barbershop craft.

"I used to be very interested in barbershop craft, or the business of teaching Barbershoppers how to be better Barbershoppers. Now I hope that barbershop craft is a passing thing because it hasn't proven as valuable as we hoped it would be. Too many of us, including myself, have put a great deal of emphasis on barbershop craft when the average chapter member didn't want it and doesn't need it. The men don't care; they couldn't care less what really makes a chord. The most important thing is that they're having fun with their singing and they feel a sense of musical achievement within their own chorus or quartet."

Did we hear a cheer from the Golden Agers?

Val Hicks again: "The contest and judging program has probably interested me the most. I started in 1954 and was certified in the winter of 1956. I became a member of the Far Western District Association Contest and Judging Committee and later became its chairman."

"I'm afraid, looking into the evolution of the barbershop style and the barbershop fun during the past twenty-five years, that within the next ten years the barbershop style will evolve even more, but it will be even less of what the old timers would call barbershop singing. We constantly have a crop of new men, young men who have known nothing but a certain musical sound from singers and records and big bands. One of the things that I personally notice is that we're getting away from the barbershop 7th chord (the dominant 7th) and we're singing another type of seventh chord called the minor seventh.

"In spite of our efforts to guard it, I really and truly feel that the barbershop style will change and evolve gradually. I'm not sure what it will evolve into, but we've changed the style in the last twenty years from what the old-timers called barbershop. (Hold your hats, folks.) What it boils down to is this: BARBERSHOP SINGING IS WHAT THE SOCIETY DEFINES IT TO BE ANY GIVEN TIME."

SIT TIGHT, there is more . . . but don't give up. Someone had to say it.

"I think", says Val, "the Society will turn more and more into a chorus organization because it seems to be the chorus that holds the chapters together. I predict that in the next ten years the Society will see the choruses continue to play an important role, possibly even a greater role than they do today.

The new blood that comes into our Society will gradually bring in new types of chorus harmony and chord voicings into our music, in spite of the watchfulness of arrangement judges."

The young men in the Society are stamped by certain common denominators; they are analytical, sincere, talented, and they attack their problems like students boning for a final. That they are leaders no one can deny and that they are here to stay is a certain fact.

"But they are professionals", the old-timers say. They work the chorus to death and insist that everyone get everything right. They are taskmasters, the Dave Stevens, the Val Hicks, Rudy Harts, Bob Johnsons, the John Petersons, and the hundreds of other intense young directors like them.

Will Cook wrote: "They are fun to sing under, providing you're young and new to barbershopping and like the big, exact sound, the technical perfection, the full gutsy ringing chords."

Many old-timers can't see it. Things just aren't the same. They are confused. They can't understand the quartet that works for a month before it will sing before the chapter. What's it all coming to?

It just wasn't like that in the old days.

So what was it like?

Let him who has ears listen to a record of quartets and choruses spanning a quarter century. Then decide for yourself.

. . . another country heard from

That 1954 convention in the Nation's capital city had stirred up many things, not the least being an article in the HARMONIZER by Dr. Harry Robert Wilson, Professor of Music Education in the Teachers College of New York City's Columbia University. Dr. Wilson found much to his liking in the Society and what he heard at the convention. He wrote: ". . . the barbershop style certainly provides a genuine emotional thrill to its coterie of followers. Barbershop, moreover, is as American as apple pie, Abe Lincoln and the game of baseball."

Those words would be quoted many times in the years to come.

The professor recognized a place for barbershopping in the schools. He also gave some words of advice or caution: "The Society must not take the attitude that barbershop is superior to the music of the classics. There are still some people who prefer Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to "You Are My Sunshine." Music teachers are using all types and styles of music to help our young fellows to grow into upright men and good

citizens. Barbershop singing is one type of music that can contribute to the educational goal. It has an immediate goal. It has an immediate appeal and it is American to the core."

Dr. Wilson was polite, yet he slyly hinted that it would be a good thing for us to listen to teachers. He said: "The director of the chapter's barbershop chorus should seek the acquaintance of the local high school choral teacher (she may be attractive). An understanding of each other's goals and problems will be of benefit to the musical activities of the school and to the encouragement of barbershop singing in the community.

"My final suggestion would take the form of a program to insure continuous sponsorship of established music writers by the Society. These groups would thus be encouraged to devote some of their time and talents to the writing and arranging of music in the barbershop idiom. This sponsorship would not be a closed-shop type of activity for members only; publication of material produced under this system would not be limited to that produced by the Society. Writing in the barbershop style should be encouraged by both amateurs and professionals. As materials are developed they should be shared with the schools.

"By demonstrating what is barbershop singing, providing methods for its instruction and encouraging the writing and use of appropriate materials, the Society will not only offer a great service to the cause of education but it will also ensure the preservation and continuance of its indigenous American style of singing for generations to come."

All of which should make old-timers feel a bit better . . . about education.

SECTION VI
Musicians take up our cause

In March, 1956, International President Arthur A. Merrill stated that the "month of April is hereby proclaimed to be FOUNDER'S MONTH in memory of our beloved founder Owen C. Cash." A proclamation that has come to mean Harmony Week to all of us.

The International Board was meeting in Denver and voted the Chicago area as best for a Headquarters building. There was a "warning on modern harmony". Pittsburgh, Pa. and Columbus, Ohio, were awarded International Conventions. The House of Delegates voted down a resolution to discontinue chorus contests on the International level beginning with the 1957 contest. Due to technicalities in presenting the resolution, it was to come up again at Minneapolis. Mid-Atlantic was boasting 2744 members and Central States had the most chapters with 69. President Arthur Merrill was pumping for "A QUANTITY OF *QUALITY* MEMBERS AND UPGRADED CHAPTER PROGRAMS.

In June, 1956, the very young looking "Schmitt Brothers" were pictured rehearsing with Johnny Means. They were preparing to appear before the MENC Convention in St. Louis.

. . . a younger man speaks up for the chorus competition

Rudy Hart, talented and energetic director of the International Champion Michigan City, Indiana chorus, and father of some of the Society's most advanced musical education programs, had this to say in 1956. "Since the chorus has created a minor revolution within our organization, it surely must be worthwhile. It's hard to believe after all the hard work and planning with the chapters and their choruses that any mature person in our Society would either directly or indirectly want to destroy the effort of the last ten years, especially when it has brought about great enjoyment plus the thrill of both district and international competition. The chorus must possess some good if it is strong enough to bring about such a controversy."

The controversy has never died. But it has changed to an argument as to what place the chorus should occupy in the Society. As competition goes on and quality improves the sounds of opposition become weaker. Many thousands who know they might never compete in a quartet are quite happy to do it in a chorus . . . and do it well.

Each year there is one International Champion chorus, but in the Society there are hundreds of choruses who do not care whether they become champions or not. They want to sing, have a good time, and perform adequately in public.

Phil Embury mentions the evolution of barbershop style. Others well qualified to speak on the subject feel that the barbershop style is still evolving, that, in a way, it is a style capable of still more development.

. . . a young man marks the milestones

Val Hicks, a specialist in many categories of barbershopping, says: "Barbershopping has been evolving, as of course we knew it would, since the formation of our Society. In the early 1940s we had quartets that sang fairly simple barbershop arrangements. There was the usual introduction and the traditional tag. With Frank Thorne's *Elastic Four* we got into more intricate arrangements with high voicing of the chords and difficult voice leaps for the individual parts.

"The *Four Teens* influenced the Society in voice and tone production more than any quartet I can think of. They were young, dynamic, energetic entertainers and their high-powered vocal arrangements and gymnastics seemed to appeal to the younger men who were joining the Society.

"The *Buffalo Bills* produced a professional vocal sound; they have always been considered one of the Society's great

quartets and today they're one of the world's great quartets. The style of barbershopping settled down a little with the *Buffalo Bills* and the *Schmitt Brothers.* Then we went into another era of experimentation with the *Four Teens* and the *Orphans,* who again sang difficult, high-powered arrangements with a lot of complex devices.

"In these later years, the Society sound seemed to settle down with the *Gaynotes,* the *Evans Quartet* and, of course, the *Sun Tones.*

The statements of these informed men, taken by themselves, offer nothing startling to the discerning Barbershopper, but it seems that advancement, experimentation, and even departure from the traditional barbershop sound has been practiced by many of our better present-day quartets. One is inclined to ask if the cheers and sounds for the victors in an International contest are for accomplishment or just for winning.

It is quite within the realm of possibility that the day will arrive when the red-headed step-child of barbershop harmony, the chorus, which still by and large sings the old songs, will be the bulwark, the last line of defense in the fight to preserve the rich, slightly square sound of barbershop as a traditional piece of American style vocal music for men.

True, the chorus, generally, refrains from highly elastic vocal gymnastics, not because it does not admire or wish to emulate top quartets, but because the complexity of matching, blending, and synchronizing forty or fifty, or even more voices, presents too great a problem for easy mastery with once-a-week rehearsals.

But certainly there are directors working on it.

. . . many details make a picture

In June of 1956 Curt Hockett came to the Society as editor of the HARMONIZER and Public Relations Director.

Minneapolis was making great preparations. Film and television character actor Burt Mustin was pictured in the 1956 HARMONIZER and was to appear again in a 1965 issue . . . still going strong.

In September came a cloudburst of news. The "Confederates" of Memphis were the new champions. The "Playtonics" of Teaneck, New Jersey 2nd; "Lads of Enchantment" from Albuquerque, New Mexico were third. In fourth spot were the "Four Pitchikers" of Springfield, Missouri and in 5th the "Easternaires" of Jersey City, New Jersey.

Rudy Hart and his "Ambassadors of Harmony" chorus from Michigan City; Indiana, won the chorus contest.

Rowland F. Davis, newly elected President, coined a phrase that deserves more usage and attention: "Stability Needs Momentum".

There was a complete story on the European Tour of the "Precisionists Chorus" of Washington, D.C.

The HARMONIZER carried a big story on the Walter Wade Memorial Song Library, sixty thousand titles to form the core of one of the greatest collections of songs outside the Library of Congress. Its value was to be appreciated more and more as the years went by.

Old Songs Library and Volunteer Librarian Bob Brooks

Oh, yes, they voted to continue chorus contests. One chorus to a district. By-laws changed to provide two additional vice-presidents "of equal rank" in each chapter.

As recommended by Rowland Davis, a pension plan was established for the International Headquarters staff.

The 1960 Convention went to Dallas, Texas.

The December, 1956 HARMONIZER carried news of the death of Frank Thorne. The Society had lost one of its all time greats.

The Mid-winter was held at Pittsburgh and an initiation fee was added for new members. A new member kit was to be included.

A chapter-at-large was established to take care of those

orphaned by the death of chapters or moving to localities without chapters.

Twenty-eight men were certified as judges. WOW!

The 1959 Convention was awarded to Chicago and the International Board approved plans to develop an "Expansion Fund" to finance purchase of a new International home for the Society and also agreed to Past International President Beeler's suggestion that a mansion located at Kenosha, Wisconsin be purchased. The HARMONIZER carried a two-page picture of the spot soon to become Harmony Hall. The picture showed up again in color on the cover of the next issue and everybody in the Society was telling how, why and what now—in that issue.

The 1957 Convention in Los Angeles saw the "Lads of Enchantment", Albuquerque, New Mexico, crowned champs, Berkeley's "Californians" take the number one chorus spot and Joe Lewis, of Dallas, Texas elected International President. Other medalists were the "West Coasters", San Gabriel, Calif., 2nd; "Gaynotes", Tulsa, Okla., 3rd; "Four Pitchikers", Springfield, Mo., 4th; and the Teaneck, N. J., "Playtonics", 5th.

Mid-winter meetings were to have a $2.50 registration fee to off-set rising costs of these sessions. The $50.00 chapter charter fee was eliminated.

Deac Martin was back with his column saying "We must Keep It Barbershop". Deac had good reasons for it.

Buffalo Bills in "Music Man" attire

Dee Paris started talking about public relations on a world wide basis. Doesn't sound so impossible these days.

Roadside signs made their appearance in many a community.

Another of Pete DePaolis' fine articles on Barbershop Craft. Running for many issues of the HARMONIZER, they were excellent groundwork for the serious Barbershopper.

The "Buffalo Bills" had joined "The Music Man", Meredith Willson's new successful musical, in New York. They had just finished a four week run in Philadelphia. From then—until now —and beyond they were to give the words barbershop harmony a new and finer meaning.

. . . the music men

A stalwart of the Society found at every convention or International meeting was Maurice Reagan, father of the "Clock System" developed from Bach's circle of fifths. (A complete musical explanation of this can be found in the "Arrangers' Manual", and the "Barbershop Craft Manual", both Society publications and obtainable from International Headquarters, P.O. Box 575, Kenosha, Wisconsin 53141.)

Reagan could identify chords as rapidly as a quartet or chorus could sing them. At critiques he would show what he meant very quickly and interestingly. He never made a criticism without offering one or more ways to fix the problem. (Reagan is one of the few Society men ever to be certified as a judge in *ALL FIVE* judging categories.)

One cannot mention any of the greats of our Society without including Bill Diekema of Holland, Michigan. He's a man of medium height and build, bald, and if we put him in a Dutchman's costume he would be the exact vision we have of a Holland Dutchman. He is president of a highly successful pharmaceutical concern, a former aviator in World War I and composer of many operettas for the University of Michigan. His arrangements are legion, and. when well-sung, reach the hearts of the listeners. There is hardly a facet of Society music and judging not touched and elevated by Bill Diekema.

Hal Boehler was another arranger who did much to aid quartets. Like Reagan, he too lost his sight and has not been active in judging and writing.

Here were men working quietly within the Society and doing their part to create better arrangements and more understanding of them. They have been no less effective, in their way than have some of our best quartets and choruses.

Quartets which used to win the International Championship

would not be apt to qualify today for the finals in some district contests. This does not mean they are to be discounted in any way. It was their loyalty to the Society that put down the foundation on which we have improved and now stand.

In making improvements we must always remember that audiences improve and are much more demanding than ever before. They demand more polish. And wherein lies any harm in that. Barbershop is good. Why not give it our best?

. . . more and more legislation

The 1958 Mid-winter at Asheville, North Carolina was hampered by bad weather and many problems. Lacking the means of quick and effective contact with members and without specific means of telling them just what problems beset us, legislation was the only path left open to Society officers.

The Executive Committee decided that the Society *should* have excellent opportunities during the next four or five years for solidification and growth. Our present Society Historian, Dean Snyder, presented a well prepared paper on "Our Status and Our Future". Dean had researched in depth, and time was to prove the excellence of many of his observations.

Floyd Connett

Floyd Connett was hired permanently as Society Field Man.

Problems of finance came up because of the equipment needed for the new home at Kenosha. Incorporation in Wisconsin, setting up of a Trust Foundation for protection of the

Society's real estate holdings (now greatly enlarged in scope as Harmony Foundation) and taking other steps to guard our members were other items on the agenda.

The Society's musical program also came up for review at Asheville. Bob Hafer and Rowland Davis made plans to meet with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) to work out some form of blanket licensing. Approval was given for publication of a Contest and Judging Handbook and the establishment of the "Woodshedder's Guild".

The HARMONIZER complained because members who moved failed to send in a change of address. They still have that trouble.

By May of 1958, Staff Taylor was belting out the hot news on the Columbus, Ohio Convention and why it would be "the biggest ever". Public Relations men still do it for each convention and, you know, they are right.

. . . more meetings, more decisions, more music

Barbershoppers discovered Columbus in June of 1958 and found their new International Champions to be the "Gaynotes" from Tulsa. Other medalists were the "Four Pitchikers" from Springfield, Mo.; the "Home Town Quartet" from Lodi, N. J.; the "West Coasters" from San Gabriel, Calif.; and the "Evans Quartet" from Salt Lake City, Utah.

Buz Busby and his bewhiskered southern gentlemen from Memphis sang their way to the chorus championship. People said it was the best contest ever, and more and more choruses were getting "serious" about their singing.

And they were getting help. From July 31 to August 3, at Harmony Hall, the Society held its first Chorus Directors' School. George Pranspill, Rudy Hart, and Floyd Connett were faculty members and 127 chorus directors were on hand from 8 in the morning till 11 in the evening to drink from the fountain of musical knowledge.

The student body learned nine new songs and developed into a chorus of championship calibre.

They came from everywhere, and the comradeship was superb.

The March, 1959 HARMONIZER reported on the Mid-winter at El Paso. It had been quite an affair. We started hearing about a television spectacular. Some changes were made in contest rules. Some guys always look for a way to do as they please.

It was decided that no chorus director may direct more than one chorus in International competition.

The Convention registration fee was raised from $10.00 to $15.00.

The Sunshine District Association of Chapters was approved as a separate district.

The 1961 Mid-winter was awarded to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The 1963 Annual Convention went to Boston, a little matter that was to be a headache for Boston due to failure of builders to come through on time.

Windsor, Ontario was transferred from the Ontario District to the Michigan District.

F. Stirling Wilson could be serious as well as humorous. He fostered, and the International Board passed, a resolution that "recognized the technical right of chapters . . . to select the singers to represent them in chorus contests provided such selection is done by methods consistent with chapter and International Society constitutions and By-laws. The International Board of Directors believes that such selective process is contrary to the best interests of the Society and records its disapproval of such methods as a matter of International policy".

Similar action was taken on a resolution presented by Rowland Davis, concerning conduct of members during the singing of "The Old Songs" and/or "Keep America Singing". This was aimed at quartets unable to control their antics during show finales.

By May of '59 there were reports from chapters taking the advice of Field Man Floyd Connett, and enthusiastic returns were reported by several. Help was coming to the grass roots.

Thirty-five hundred more copies of old songs were added to the Harmony Hall Library by Mrs. Ken Grant of Cleveland, Ohio. Grant, a former bass with the Lakewood, Ohio Chapter, had made a hobby of collecting old songs.

In Chicago, the "Four Pitchikers", Springfield, Mo., became 1959 champs and Pekin, Ill., took the chorus crown. Runners-up in the quartet competition were the "Evans Quartet" (Salt Lake City, Utah), 2nd; "Town & Country Four" (Pittsburgh, Pa.), 3rd; "Easternaires" (Jersey City, N. J.), 4th; and "Short Cuts" (Miami, Fla.) 5th.

The Society gave its first honorary memberships to Irving Berlin and Meredith Willson. Since neither could be present at the Chicago meeting, Ted Lewis, renowned showman and orchestra leader, accepted for Berlin, and Byron Mellberg, lead of the "Frisco Four" from the Chicago Company of "The Music Man", received the membership credentials for Mr. Willson.

Morris Rector, bass of the "Gaynotes", filled Jim Ewin's "Craft" column in the HARMONIZER with an article titled "Sight-reading by Ear". He made it all *look* simple . . . and easy. But some of us can't or won't read . . . anything . . . not even music.

The old Association of Bulletin Editors gave way to a new organization that recognized the Public Relations Officers. Up came a new name, PROBE, for Public Relations Officers and Bulletin Editors. It was destined to become a really influential fraternity within the Society. The influence has always been for the good.

Jean Boardman's "Harmony Heritage" songs were coming out right along but it was amazing how few quartets and choruses used them in contest. Everyone seemed afraid they would sing a song someone else was singing. Years later a good many of these songs were to be *discovered* by new members only to cause many older ones to say: "Where did you get that arrangement?"

Bob Hockenbrough stayed up nights to read bulletins, answer mail and keep up an ever well-written and useful "Share The Wealth" column.

Floyd Connett had the first of his regular columns. The title: "Down Our Way" . . . And Dallas was looking forward to June.

International President Jalving and Executive Director Bob Hafer decided to look over the Society at first hand. By air, bus, train, auto and dog-sled (in Alaska) they covered outposts of harmony that had previously only heard echoes from Harmony Hall.

By the end of July the "Evans Quartet" had been crowned Champions and the "Chordsmen" from San Antonio's Alamo Heights were wearing the same title in the chorus division.

Second place Medalists were the "Town & Country Four", Pittsburgh, Pa.; the "Colonials" from East Liverpool, Ohio, 3rd; "Bay Town Four", Berkeley, Calif., 4th; and "Saints", South Bay, Calif., 5th.

The Dallas meeting produced a shocker in the resignation of Floyd Connett as Field Representative. In three years he had traveled over 100.000 miles by car plus additional mileage by air and rail; had visited 400 chapters and all districts to present various classes aimed at promoting music education for our members. His was a pioneer effort aimed at promoting personal contact, the effort of a devoted and dedicated Barbershopper.

Milwaukee started to prepare for the 1961 Mid-winter meeting and President Jalving appealed for a close reading of eight pages of material concerning a Membership Benefit Plan about to be presented to the districts for their approval or rejection. That is another story.

SECTION VII

Our Silver Anniversary nears . . . we become of age . . . musically and administratively

. . . the Membership Benefit Plan

For some time prior to 1960, deeply interested members and leaders of the Society could see that we were outgrowing our old ways. There was serious concern over chapters which vanished without a trace. A membership turnover of 5,000 to 7,000 members per year for almost a decade was indicative of need for radical changes . . . somewhere.

Early in 1960 President Clarence Jalving appointed a special committee of International officers, headed by Vice President Lou Laurel of El Paso, Texas. The committee was asked to formulate a program designed to improve the Society by improving the individual member after making increased and additional benefits available to him and his chapter. The committee was also given the task of recommending a dues increase which would cover the costs of administering such additional benefits.

The conclusions of the committee, as set forth in their report to the International House of Delegates, was briefly stated as follows: "What our members want more than anything else is personalized field service, both musical and administrative." With this objective in mind, a plan was worked out by the International Executive Committee for submission to the House of Delegates and Board of Directors at the Dallas Convention, June 22, 1960. The Program (called "Member Benefit Program") encompassed the following new personnel, to be employed and trained:

A Director of Field Operations to plan and supervise activities of the following:

A. A Director of Musical Activities.
B. Five Field Representatives.
C. A full-time Director of Public Relations.
D. A Convention Manager.

Nine key men plus approximately six persons in productive and clerical jobs would be added to the then staff of 20 employees.

The purpose of all this was as stated at the beginning: to build a better informed membership, to provide stronger chapters, and to develop greater public awareness and appreciation of the Society and its contributions to society in general.

A part of the proposal called for International's portion of the dues to be $15.00, including the $1.50 HARMONIZER subscription.

Hopefully—questionnaires were sent out to a few members, with the thought replies would be published. They were not. Some did not reply; some sent in replies much too lengthy to permit publication due to excessive cost. Whatever the reasons, it was claimed by some that Headquarters was withholding this information. This was ill-founded for enough circulation was given to the replies to permit the subject matter to eventually become widespread. Later, a special edition of the HARMONIZER was issued with eight solid pages explaining the plan and what it was hoped to accomplish with its adoption. But the article presented only the favorable side of the program. This was unfortunate. The objections were loud, long, sharp, and sometimes acrid.

. . . everybody got in the act

Not all of the critics of the plan were obscure members. Many were men of influence. Among these were editors of Society publications at all levels. As usual, the constructive plans offered were few and far between. The simple truth was that very few members took the time to actually digest the presentation of the plan and balance it against their own objections. Perhaps the sudden fact that "they" *had done something,* and that it touched the average Barbershopper, was just too much to take.

But the proposition was voted down by the districts . . . almost unanimously.

Our Society Officials cannot escape a portion of the blame for rejection of the MBP. Had they presented the negative side of the argument, with answers to objections, it would have presented more real information for the members who were being called upon for financial sacrifice. These members were entitled to hear all sides of the story. The story was involved and lengthy. It now seems that too much was planned too soon, and this opinion is given with all due respect for the hardworking, conscientious committee under the direction of Lou Laurel, who became International President in 1962.

. . . more ideas, more plans, some action

Out of the flurry of alternate plans and suggestions several were presented at the Philadelphia Convention in July, 1961. These ideas assumed a more practical nature in that they admitted that some increase in dues would be necessary if the

Society wished to progress along the lines of increased administrative efficiency and more skilled musical performance. The Board made important decisions. Among these was the following:

Section 10.02 of the International By-Laws was changed to provide that each chapter of the Society should pay to the Society for each active member of such chapter a per capita dues of $6.75 per annum, plus $1.50 annual HARMONIZER subscription fee, to be collected in the manner prescribed by the Board and to be used by the Society for its purposes as set forth in the By-Laws. This change resulted in the increase in per capita dues of $2.75 recommended by the Long Range Planning Committee which had spent considerable time and effort in studying various plans presented as alternatives to the extensive projects contemplated by the MBP.

Other suggestions formulated and approved by the Committee were the following:

1. Steps to improve the musical excellence of the Society's members and its product, by providing opportunity to those who wished to improve their proficiency in our style of singing.
2. Recognition of the many facets connected with our hobby and the necessity of creating a climate whereby each member could derive exactly what he wants from the Society.
3. Recognition of the necessity for continuously upgrading the quality of the Society's administrative capabilities at all levels. Qualified, trained leadership was needed, especially at the district and chapter levels. Although the value and indispensability of volunteers was recognized, it was also held that the work of the volunteers must be supplemented by full-time workers, with compensation to enable them to undertake such labors. It was recommended that policies and programs of the Society as a whole should continue to be promulgated by the International Board, and that the districts should be responsible for the successful operation of such policies and programs, and accountable to the Board.

In order to carry out these ideas to the point of execution, the per capita dues were calculated to provide for the additional personnel as follows:

1. A competent Director of Musical Activities to supervise and be responsible for the publication of music, the setting up of courses of study and materials for barbershop craft and for chorus director schools, quartet development and such other

facets of musical improvement as were applicable.
2. A Special Events Manager, to handle International Conventions and develop methods and manuals for district conventions and other meetings and training sessions, etc.
3. To experiment with an idea suggested by officers of the Mid-Atlantic District, by employing a field man in one selected district, who would be responsible for promoting more efficient and constructive methods of administrative and operating practices. This man would be assigned to trouble spots under the general direction of the Executive Director, training officers at all levels, organizing schools and carrying out related projects. At the end of a year his activities would be evaluated for the purposes of deciding whether it would be wise to continue his activities or not, and whether additional field men would be justified.
4. An associate editor of the HARMONIZER would be added to free the Director of Public Relations for more and better public relations projects and planning.

Thus did the Society adopt many of the pertinent plans of the MBP, with some changes and modifications. Thus, too, was it realized that the MBP probably offered too much too soon. In other words, the membership could not assimilate such increased activity without, it felt, losing some of the spontaneity and spirit of amateurism which has always characterized it.

. . . things kept moving

With the MBP a hot topic of discussion, singing lost none of its charm.

Philadelphia was crowded with Barbershoppers and over 9,000 fans jammed Convencion Hall for the Quartet Finals Contest.

The "Sun Tones", of Miami and West Palm Beach, took the honors and became a top-notch favorite with the entire Society. An impressive Flag Day ceremony was sung by the Delco Chorus. Arthur Godfrey was the principal speaker.

The "Town and Country Four" were 2nd; the "Nighthawks", 3rd; "Bay Town Four", 4th; and "Saints", 5th.

Bob Johnson's big "Chorus of The Chesapeake" (Dundalk, Maryland) took the chorus honors just eight points ahead of the Louisville, Kentucky "Thoroughbreds".

International President John Cullen reviewed our doings past and present and ended with an admonition to do a little researching. It was different to find a president asking questions instead of trying to answer them. It was the type of thing that

made Mister Barbershopper think a bit.

The "Nighthawks" had gone to England at the invitation of Charles Lynch, President of the Canadian War Correspondents, and had given a real shot in the arm to close harmony.

And the first HEP school was scheduled for August 24-27 at St. Mary's College, Winona, Minnesota.

The Harmony Education Program (soon dubbed HEP) was the dream of International Vice President Rudy Hart. His conception of such a school was a concentrated course administered by qualified Society members.

A grand idea?

Certainly. Yet, it met widespread skepticism.

Wrote Will Cook, in making his notes for this history: "It was something Rudy had to fight for, with the backing of a handful of believers. He had to convince a lot of people that there was enough desire among Barbershoppers to learn more about their art to justify such a school; he was confident that the prospects of a semi-vacation meeting with others from all over the country would be an incentive which would attract members.

"His understanding of the barbershopping mind was correct.

"The school ran four days and the course included: Barbershop Arranging taught by the two Society masters, Bill Diekema and Maurice Reagan; Chorus Development, with Bob Johnson as the instructor; Barbershop Craft, conducted by John Peterson; Quartet Promotion, with Joe and Paul Schmitt sharing the teaching chores; Script Writing taught by Wilbur Sparks and Stirling Wilson; and Stagecraft and Lighting, instructed by Charles Wilcox, Bob Hockenbrough, Alec Finkler and Wayne Foor.

"Although it was repeatedly announced that the school could accommodate only four hundred men, five hundred reported and registered for the classes. The extra one hundred were early arrivals and tossed the plans for a smooth-running registration into a bedlam for a short time. However, all were taken care of in the matter of lodging and food with the classes being enlarged so that no one was short changed.

"Classes began at eight in the morning, one-thirty in the afternoon, and eight in the evening and ran for three hours a session. After each class, all the students gathered in the gymnasium for a one-hour chorus rehearsal in preparation for the

show which would be staged the coming Saturday night. These chorus sessions were directed by Rudy Hart, and for those who had never served under a master teacher, his methods were highly instructive.

"Each student was allowed to take any five of the announced six courses, which included lectures, demonstrations, and discussion. The motto: 'Each One Teach One', was backed by the idea that every man attending should pass on his knowledge to another Barbershopper, thereby radiating the effects of the school throughout the Society.

"At the Saturday night show five quartets of national reputation filled out the parade. They were: the "Hut Four" from Minneapolis; the "Derbytowners" of Louisville, Kentucky; the "Gay Nineties" of Montevideo, Minnesota; the "Schmitt Brothers" from Two Rivers, Wisconsin; and the International Champions of 1961, the "Sun Tones" of Miami and West Palm Beach, Florida. As predicted by the teachers of the stagecraft class, 'anything may go wrong with an unrehearsed show' and some things did, but not beyond the usual difficulties which arise when shows do not have well-trained stage hands.

"Officials suggested that a second school the following year might double the attendance of the first, and the college authorities, pleased with the conduct of Barbershoppers, extended an invitation to the Society to use their facilities.

"The 1962 HEP school was held at St. Mary's at Winona, Berkeley, Calif., Reading, Pa., Niagara Falls, Ont., and Fort Worth, Tex. As predicted, attendance was more than doubled."

. . . a little travelling music

Bob Johnson, one of the faculty at that first HEP school, was to become the Society's first Director of Musical Activities (he was appointed in February of 1962 along with HARMONIZER Editor Leo Fobart, Past President of the LOL District, and Special Events Manager Chuck Snyder, a Past President and Past International Board Member from Illinois). Since then Bob has traveled over 300,000 miles preaching the gospel of barbershop harmony.

Dean of future HEP schools, Bob Johnson met many Barbershoppers and often left them with one impression—that he was a great teacher and a great director.

A professional musician who earned his living teaching music, Bob Johnson has this to say: "I was introduced to S.P.E.B.-S.Q.S.A. while teaching on a college campus in Pennsylvania.

Two students used to 'woodshed' with me; we only sang informally even though we spent a good deal of time practicing. This was around 1947, and as a result of our interest, a request was made to International to start a campus chapter, but they were not willing. However, an outgrowth of this was the formation of a college barbershop quartet, composed, of all things, of two men and two women.

"Barbershop singing, to me, was geared to good ear training. It took a good ear to sing.

"In the winter of 1949 I was called upon, as a teacher of music, to help a group of men who wanted to start a chapter in Saegertown. I trained the chorus and the chorus director, and acted as master of ceremonies at their first show. They chartered shortly after that, and had several college professors among their charter members.

"Still I didn't join the Society.

"This didn't happen until 1956, after I had moved to Baltimore, when I was asked to direct a new chapter which was starting in Dundalk, a suburb of Baltimore.

"This chapter was started by fifteen men who felt a need for disciplined, organized, professionally-guided singing. They had thirty-three men at their first meeting, and just grew from there. The whole idea was that hard work makes for greater enjoyment.

Bob Johnson teaches West Point Cadets

"The chapter chartered in January, 1957, with over one hundred members.

"Choruses have moved forward at a great pace, but still there is plenty of room for improvement. Our choruses have not yet discovered the pure musical sounds. There is still a great deal of both oversinging and mechanical singing. However, I hasten to add that we seem to be approaching the more musical sound all the time. Perhaps as we attract more and more musically trained directors, we'll get it more often.

"Personally I don't believe we have left the ranks of the amateur, but I believe we are amateurs who perform at a high level of accomplishment, which in many cases, exceeds the level of the professional. Still we do not approach the level of achievement of the truly dedicated professional.

"In the future I expect a higher level of quality and ability in the retained members. I see more men of musical ability assuming administrative roles. I see also an increase in dues and more service to the member from International. There will be regional (paid) directors of music education and training, all working toward a common goal. I see a change in the judging system and perhaps fewer, but larger chapters and new chapters in large communities which are now barren. Above all, I see more and more active, high-level members serving their communities and themselves through more common goals and less individual goals.

"In other words, more Society-minded members."

That has a familiar ring to it. Others, going far back in the Society, have felt that the average member does not know enough, or care enough; he is in this thing for *personal* enjoyment, what he can get out of it, and is not overly concerned about the pleasure his neighbor in the chorus is getting.

Chapter officers, and many good ones, have given up in disgust because they couldn't find members who would do an adequate job on assigned tasks. Too few turned out for rehearsals, and too few for local, non-paying singouts. But they all crowded back those last few weeks before the show, appeared on stage, and promptly became a once-a-month-Barbershopper —if they had the time.

Our Society leaders from the beginning, without exception, have all had a good grasp of The Big Picture, and their efforts have mainly been directed at getting the average Barbershopper to see it also.

In this they have not succeeded too well, but they are making

inroads, and devoting a lot of time and thought and programming to it. Perhaps the Society never will accomplish this, but it is ever widening that pool of talent, administrative and musical, and competition is stiffening to the point where a chorus must rise to a certain level of achievement or know that they are terrible, below par, a poor chapter, and as Bob Johnson said, "Adding doubt upon doubt".

The listening public, too, cannot be fooled indefinitely. Neither will it accept, in the long pull, musical forms which are without genuine merit, and barbershop harmony, rather than becoming 'cult' music, has gained the attention of thousands of people who will never sing it.

Men like Boardman and Stevens and Johnson and many other leaders have long realized that we will not support our own hobby; the truth of it is that we really never have. Our yearly dues support our International administration, but the chapters meet their budgets by placing before the public a yearly musical offering, the show.

An investigation into box office receipts reveals the true nature of barbershop harmony support. Generally no more than seventeen percent of the receipts come from the purse of fellow-Barbershoppers. The remainder is divvied up by Mr. and Mrs. Public, who through the long, patient years, have come to enjoy an evening of grand, wholesome entertainment for a most modest price.

They are not singers.

They are fans who like our music, and it is to these people that Society leaders through the years insist we must play. It is these people we must please before we are allowed the luxury of pleasing merely ourselves.

And whether this message is hammered home in the autocratic manner of a Jean Boardman, or the soft persuasiveness of a Phil Embury, or the relentless administrative pressure of a Bob Hafer, the fact remains that this doctrine is true.

It is gospel.

And Barbershoppers everywhere had better believe it.

. . . home coming

"Songs of Service" was the theme in 1962, and barbershop chapters were contributing more and more to their communities. Val Hicks even wrote a song to tie in with the motto, but, like Frank Thorne's version of "Keep America Singing", it never quite caught on.

It ('62) was also "homecoming year" as Barbershoppers

streamed into Kansas City to see where it had all started through a chance meeting between Owen C. Cash and Rupe Hall at the Hotel Muehlebach. They sang in that same hotel lobby; and they listened to the finest quartets and choruses in the country. They judiciously marked their programs, and when it was all over most everyone agreed that the "Gala Lads", from Alhambra, Calif., were certainly the cream of the crop. Second were the "Town and Country Four" from Pittsburgh, followed by the "Four Renegades" from Chicago; the "Nighthawks" from London, Ontario; and the "Sidewinders" from Riverside, Calif. In the chorus competition it was the Louisville "Thoroughbreds" all the way.

Despite all the fine music at Kansas City, administration wasn't completely forgotten. Hugh Ingraham became the first Canadian to join the headquarters staff when he was appointed as the Society's first Administrative Field Representative and assigned to the Johnny Appleseed District.

In still another administrative move at Kansas City, the Past International Presidents were given a vote on the International Board. And Wayne Foor, of Rochester, N. Y., was elected to lead us through our big silver anniversary year. It was to be a trying year for Wayne in many ways, but more of that later.

The year ended with a big barbershop seventh as chapters all across the States and Canada held "Music Man" contests to tie in with the great new film based on Meredith Willson's Broadway hit. Bob Johnson and Curt Hockett were on hand to represent the Society at the big premiere in Mason City, Iowa, and so were the "Buffalo Bills". Yet it didn't seem quite the same somehow without Bill Spangenberg around.

. . . we're twenty-five years old

S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.'s Silver Anniversary started out with a thud due to the resignation of the Society's Executive Director, Bob Hafer . . . the resignation to be effective following the Toronto Convention. Few men had given as much to the Society as Bob Hafer, and large shoes they would be to fill.

There were other shoes to fill, too. For death claimed Past President Johnny Means and the man who designed the Society's official emblem, Dick Sturges.

But there were happier days ahead, and many of them were spent in Toronto, site of the Society's 25th annual convention and contests. It was the first International Convention

ever held in Canada, and as they say north of the border, it was "quite a do": fireworks, parades, and the biggest birthday cake ever. Quite a contest, too, as the "Town and Country Four" from Pittsburgh were crowned our Silver Anniversary Champs, followed by the "Nighthawks" from London; the "Sidewinders" from Riverside, Calif.; the "Four Renegades" from Chicago; and the "Four Rascals" from Marblehead, Mass. History was made in the chorus contest as Pekin, Ill. became the first chorus ever to repeat as International Champs. In so doing they defeated two other past champs: Berkeley, Calif., who finished third; and the San Antonio "Chordsmen", who were fourth. In second slot was the "Chorus of the Dunes" from Gary, Ind., while Ontario's "East York Barbershoppers" finished fifth.

But the executive sessions vied with the contest sessions for attention in Toronto for everyone wanted to know who the new Executive Director would be. After careful study of many fine applications the board appointed Barrie Best, then President of the Far Western District, to fill the position vacated by Hafer.

So the Society enters its second 25 years with a new hand at the helm. What lies ahead?

Mrs. Corinne Cash wrote in the 25th Anniversary edition of the HARMONIZER: "At first it seemed to be only a few men with a love for music and singing in harmony. Then all at once this thing spread like the down of a thistle, blowing in all directions."

That's still what it's all about, Mrs. Cash . . . "men with a love for music and singing in harmony". But the few have turned into 30,000.

And still we grow . . . for ours are "Melodies for Millions".

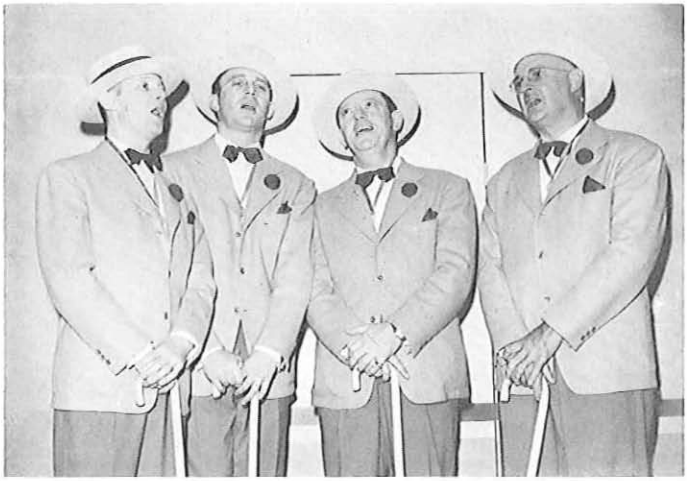
Quartet Champions

1938-1963

Bartlesville Barflies—Bartlesville, Oklahoma—1939

Flat Foot Four—Oklahoma City, Oklahoma—1940

The Chord Busters—Tulsa, Oklahoma—1941



The Elastic Four—Chicago, Illinois—1942

The Four Harmonizers—Chicago, Illinois—1943

The Harmony Halls—Grand Rapids, Michigan—1944

The Misfits—Chicago, Illinois—1945

Garden State Quartet—Jersey City, New Jersey—1946

Doctors of Harmony—Elkhart, Indiana—1947

The Pittsburghers—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—1948

Mid-States Four—Chicago, Illinois—1949

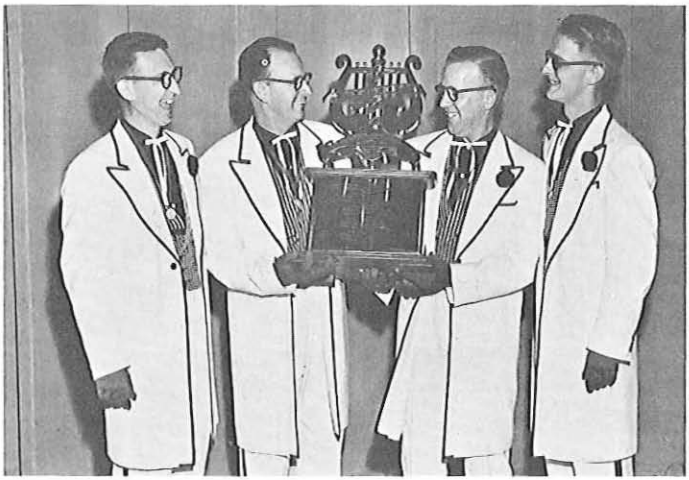
Buffalo Bills—Buffalo, New York—1950

Schmitt Brothers—Manitowoc, Wisconsin—1951

Four Teens—Scott Air Force Base, Illinois—1952

Vikings—Rock Island, Illinois—1953

The Orphans—Wichita, Kansas—1954



The Four Hearsemen—Amarillo, Texas—1955

The Confederates—Memphis, Tennessee—1956

Lads of Enchantment—Albuquerque, New Mexico—1957

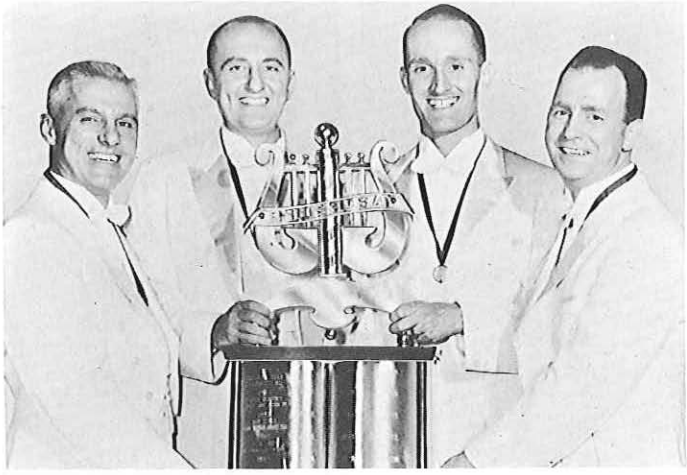
Gay Notes—Tulsa, Oklahoma—1958

Pitchikers—Springfield, Missouri—1959

Evans Quartet—Salt Lake City, Utah—1960

Sun Tones—West Palm Beach and Miami, Florida—1961

The Gala Lads—Alhambra, California—1962



Town and Country Four—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—1963

International Presidents 1940-1963

Norman F. Rathert (1940-1941)

Carroll P. Adams (1941-1942)

*Harold B. Staab (1942-1944)

* Deceased

Phil Embury (1944-1946)

*Frank Thorne (1946-1947)

Charles Merrill (1947-1948)

O. H. King Cole (1948-1950)

*Deceased

Jerry Beeler (1950-1951)

*James F. Knipe (1951-1952)

Edwin Smith (1952-1953)

*John Z. Means (1953-1954)

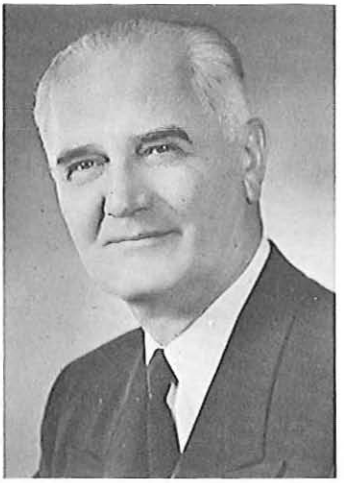
*Deceased

Berney Simner (1954-1955)

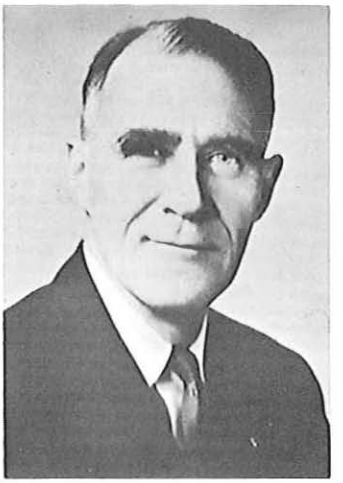
Arthur Merrill (1955-1956)

Rowland F. Davis (1956-1957)

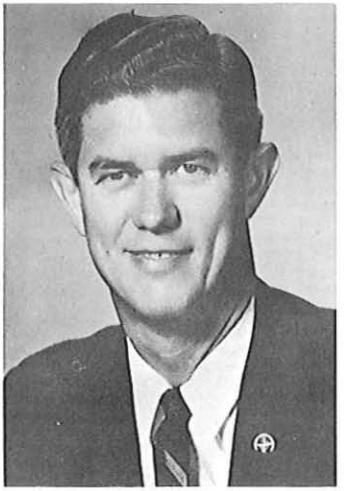
Joseph E. Lewis (1957-1959)



Clarence F. Jalving (1959-1960)



John Cullen (1961)



Louis Laurel (1962)

S. Wayne Foor (1963)

(Continued from back cover)

convenience, facilities, location . . . and easily within our reach financially. Past Illinois District President and International Board Member Jim Martin, who had spearheaded an unsuccessful movement to bring the Headquarters building to La Grange (a suburban Chicago city), learned of the availability of the Kenosha property and set the wheels in motion which resulted in its acquisition.

What about the building itself? Rising with majestic dignity it reflects the character and prestige of our great Society . . . a symbol of our stature and our place in the world of music.

In a quiet woodland setting on a small rise above the shore, its splendid appearance dominates a fine neighborhood. Only a few minutes from downtown . . . close to hotels, motels and fine restaurants . . . 60 miles from Chicago's Loop and 45 miles from the heart of Milwaukee, it's right smack in the middle of a hot-bed of barbershopping activity.

It's big and roomy. Over 18,000 square feet of floor space, including a full basement, first and second floors and attic. The classic beauty of the baronial style architecture is in lasting good taste. The sturdy construction inside and out reflects the very finest craftsmanship and materials.

Imported Belgian brick; stone trim; inch-thick slate roof; terrazzo, stone and oak flooring; copper ductwork; English stained glass and bronze hardware all contribute to its lasting beauty and charm.

So now we had the site and the $25,000 down payment (representing one third of the purchase price); all we needed was the balance. Or was it? Now that we had the building, additional funds were needed to furnish it and to implement some of the plans for stepped-up membership benefits. As usual Barbershoppers rose to the occasion and through pledges and outright contributions raised a total of $178,000 in five years. The building mortgage itself was burned at the Chicago Convention in 1959 as planned. Additional funds were used to pay for expanded service.

When the doors of Harmony Hall opened, so did a new era in barbershopping. These doors have been open since that time to song, harmony, fellowship and service. Welcome to Harmony Hall and its "Melodies for Millions".

"Beautiful HARMONY HALL in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the western shore of Lake Michigan, is the International Headquarters of S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A." That's the way we describe our Headquarters building on the picturesque colored post cards handed to hundreds of visitors who inspect our premises each year. How we obtained this architectural masterpiece is a story all by itself.

We all know at least part of this story. How O. C. Cash and Rupe Hall of Tulsa, Oklahoma started the whole thing and saw it mushroom into a large international organization demanding a central headquarters office. How then Secretary Carroll Adams set up the original headquarters in his home. How we expanded into rented space in Detroit, but never quite caught up with the Society's requirements. How demands on the International office grew clear out of bounds. How limited space and facilities for years frustrated the Society's desire to provide greater, better service to its chapters and members.

International Past President O. H. King Cole's "dream" of "an International Shrine of barbershopping, Home of S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A." appeared in a 1949 HARMONIZER, and the Sheboygan, Wisconsin Chapter (King's home chapter) made the first $100 contribution to an International Building Fund, which grew to nearly $21,000 before serious thought was actually given to a building. Finally in 1956, after an eight-man building site committee had reported to then International President Art Merrill at Denver, things began to jell as the Board chose the Chicago area as the most desirable location.

Then out of the blue—Kenosha. The answer to our dreams . . . everything we had ever hoped for . . . elegance, charm,

(See inside back cover)