How to be a Successful Chapter Historian
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The historian is too often overlooked and considered unimportant in the life blood of the chapter. Truth is this job is one where a member can easily exceed expectations, gain a great deal of personal satisfaction and provide a wonderful service to the members past, present and future.

The common misconception is to appoint or expect this position to be filled by one of the more veteran members. This is NOT a requirement and, truth be told, the chapter may be better served if this is done by a member with little or no barbershop experience. There is also no term limit to this position. The longer one person serves, the better he becomes at it and the better served is the chapter.

The job of historian has several layers and areas of responsibilities. These tasks are, but not limited to:

Observing / Recording / Reporting / Researching / Collecting / Gathering / Promoting / Reuniting / Perpetuating

The chapter historian often determines the priorities of the list above and customizes the job based on the needs of the chapter. He can make this position as much or as little work as he can handle. In a perfect world ALL of these areas need to be covered and there is no need to force oneself to do ALL of this without help. Don’t be afraid to delegate. In most cases, those who help will appreciate being a part of this and enjoy learning and helping.

Observing / Recording / Reporting / Researching
This is the easy part of the job. Just sit back and watch. Take note of who does what and when. Mentally record the names and faces and events. We all do this but as historian, the exercise takes on a new dimension as the memory needs to be accurate. Members need someone to be the point of contact for the FACTS. Often the memories fade and history gets revised by those who swear their version is the real truth. This is a continuing battle and being an accurate observer is key.

Collecting / Gathering
To help with the accuracy of true facts is being able to confirm them and back up your claims. This is where creating and maintaining a chapter historical archives is very helpful. One should consider gathering Show Programs, Photos, Chapter Bulletins, Photos, Score Sheets, Photos, Awards and , of course, Photos.

Having a place to keep this material is important. It is strongly suggested these NOT be kept in a garage or attic as they should be cared for in a climate controlled environment. File cabinets are best for organization. This seems to be obvious but you’d be surprised
how many keep this historical material in less than ideal conditions and when it’s time to
use them, they are ruined and / or useless.

Of course, one of the toughest parts of this job is to be detail oriented and diligent. This is
where the historian can shine. Maintaining this material includes IDENTIFYING the
faces and dates of the items in the collection. How often does one see photos with no note
of who is in the photo, the event or even the year it was taken. A good historian tries to
record this information during the gathering process. It pays off in the end.

Promoting
Now that one has been observing and collecting it’s time to promote. The historian is the
perfect person to write articles for the chapter bulletin and be sure there is a historical
presence in the chapter show program and website. The members always enjoy learning
about the past and especially the story of their fellow members and what they did in the
early years of the chapter. They also depend on the historian to write something about
those who pass on. This is one of the honors of being historian. Displays at chapter
meetings or shows is another great way all the collecting and researching can be put to
use.

Reuniting
Another joy is promoting and taking part in organizing a chapter reunion. This is always
a special event and doesn’t have to necessarily be done in anniversary years divided by 5.
Of course, the big ones (25th and 50th) are a MUST.

Perpetuating
One of the end results of all the work of a successful chapter historian is increasing
awareness and educating the members. It’s important to show there were members (and
wives) who came before and made all this possible today. Today we have a tendency to
live in the present and near future. Looking back give us all a stronger sense of purpose
and focus.

A chapter historian can accomplish much and serve today's members, while honoring
those who went before, in a very special way.
Chapter Anniversaries / Reunions 101
This organization is more than “a bunch of guys singing” each week
Written by Grady Kerr and the Society Archives Committee - September 2008

The anniversary of a barbershop chapter is an important milestone and it should be celebrated in GRAND style.

This event gives the chapter many unique opportunities and convenient excuses to promote the chapter internally as well as externally. There are several valuable payoffs to be gained.

Imagine how many man hours have been worked and how many songs have been rehearsed and how many people have been entertained throughout these years. The results are remarkable and the journey has been unique.

It’s sometimes important to stop and realize all you have accomplished. It’s also vitally important to pay tribute to those who made it possible for you to be singing in this chapter today. Some chapters have not survived, yours has – why? Because of the dedication of those who stood on those risers in years past.

From the Riser Guys to the Coffee Maker to the Music Librarian to the Board Member and the Director; all have served this chapter through the years and it wouldn’t be what it is today without them ALL?

Here’s your chance to say thanks and tell them their time wasn’t wasted as you are carrying on their mission.

It’s also a chance to let the current membership know this organization is more than “a bunch of guys singing” each week. It’s much bigger and more important than that.

So, here’s a list of some ideas and tasks that should be considered in making this a successful once-in-a-lifetime event.

Things to Do

Organize
- Name a chairman, select a committee, set a date and establish a budget.
- Involve membership with committee – define tasks to accomplish the items below – set deadlines - follow up.
- Promote to active membership via the bulletin, announcements and your website.

Research
- Organize and determine best way to use this material.

Gather
- Locate and invite all former and inactive chapter members by **PHONE** – follow up by email.
- Print and mail invitations.

Promote
- Announce in chapter bulletin – website.
- Run articles in chapter bulletin prior to event and recap in following bulletin.
- Announce in District Bulletin.
- Announce via the Harmonet and SAI SING and other BBS Yahoo Groups.
- Publicize event to local press – invite local representatives (Mayor. etc.).
- Get Proclamation from Mayor’s office.
- Get Proclamation from Governor’s Office.
- Inform your District Board – invite BOD members - get a letter from the President
- Inform Society HQ – get letter from the Society CEO
- Inform Society Board – get letter from the Int’l President
- Invite local chapter presidents (including Sweet Ads)
- Invite members’ wives and chapter widows

Celebrate
- Book special guest quartet
- Recognize chapter Presidents – BOTYs - Directors
- Produce special hard copy, souvenir bulletin for that night
- Create a booklet showing chapter history as a handout
- Set up historical display showing chapter history (photos and bulletins)
- Allow time to mix and mingle – include singing (talk to singing ratio: 60/40)
- Use this special as a guest night.

Reunite
- Reunite old chapter quartets

The Event
- Give up ONE full rehearsal for this special event (one every 50 years is all we ask).
- Create Name Badges with LARGE letters and returning member’s claim to fame.
- Recognize special guests.
- Have SHORT speeches by current chapter leaders and other presenters.
- Play edited montage of past performances on big video screen.
- Show photos and FACES of past members on big screen.
- Pull out old songs once performed by chorus and sing again
• Have a Reunion Chorus – a few pre-event rehearsals may be needed – have former directors lead
• Have reunited quartets perform
• Have a special guest quartet perform to show guests how it’s done and attract current members.
• This is a celebration. Include finger foods and refreshments.
• Invite women’s auxiliary to decorate hall.

Post-Event
Establish a Chapter Archive to hold the material collected
Establish and name a chapter historian to manage archives, collect new material, observe and collect memorabilia and write articles to chapter bulletin.
Set date for the NEXT reunion.
Recognize key member(s) who organized and ran the reunion and present award(s) at chapter banquet.

Payoffs
• Membership better informed about history of their chapter.
• Guests for that night will understand this is something more than “just a bunch of guys singing”
• The locals will be educated as to the chapter’s place in the community.
• Involves local community leaders.
• An excellent opportunity for press coverage and PR in the community
• Creates a diversion from normal rehearsals
• Expands your exposure in the community thus more paid performances
• Creates more esprit de corps among members and families past and present.
• Gives the active members a better sense of pride in their organization.
• Goes a long way toward showing appreciation and recognition of the members who came before.
• Shows current membership their work and efforts will not be forgotten.
Chapter Anniversary PR Opportunities

Celebrate your past … look toward your future … and get some local media exposure.

The urge to mark anniversaries extends to all corners of our culture. The good people at Hallmark make a fine living reminding us that a first wedding anniversary is “paper,” and birthdays always deserve a card. We make public holidays of commemorative anniversaries, such as Independence Day, Victoria Day and Canada Day.

Many chapters and districts are approaching milestone anniversaries of fifty years. When is yours? Find out online at:

https://secure.spebsqsa.org/members/memberportal/MilestoneChapters.aspx

The current flood of chapter anniversaries is the legacy of the Society's rapid postwar expansion; we added 235 chapters between 1947 and 1957—so you can see why there's been so much celebrating going on!

Heritage in our communities is a great public relations asset, and your fiftieth anniversary is perhaps your best opportunity to exploit it for recognition. Get the most mileage from your anniversary: make it a tool for both building member pride and for involving non-members in your organization.

Craft a theme to serve your goals

Our word “January” is derived from the Roman god of doors and gateways, Janus, who had two faces looking in opposite directions. During his festival month, we look backwards on the past year and forward into the new.

Your anniversary is a gateway, too, when you reflect on the past accomplishments of the chapter, and look forward into the future. We don’t want to live in the past, though. Rather, we want to use the story of where we came from to explain where we are today, and to invite people to help us shape the future. We want to present our rich heritage as a foundation for our vibrant present, and a springboard to an exciting future.

One good story is to compare and contrast the world today with the world of 19xx when the chapter was founded. Search your public library’s newspaper archive for a few notable events that took place in your town fifty years ago, the advertised prices of a loaf of bread and a soda and a new car, and compare to the world today. Show how your chapter fit into the lifestyle of that day—and of today.

And that’s the nut of it: look for ways to tell the story that singing barbershop harmony is a relevant, timely, relaxing hobby today—and will be for years to come.

Other phrases to keep in mind:
• “Reflecting our heritage and looking forward, ...”
• “Reflecting a tradition of recreational singing, ...”
• “Celebrating 50 years of service through song, ...”
• “The world has changed quite a bit since the Kordsmen were founded, but the tradition of singing four-part harmony has survived.”

Use images that capture the spirit

The images and terminology you use to tell your story will determine the kind of message you send. If the only images you use are “olden days” and today’s super-seniors, that’s how you’ll be perceived— as dated. It’s important to offer a variety of images that convey youth, strength, vitality and cultural diversity.

Have you ever looked at anniversary announcements in the newspaper? Typically, they contain two photos: one of the couple on their wedding day, and another of the happy couple today. What does this tell us? Audiences love to compare “before” and “after.” Photos that compare and contrast the world today with the time of your founding provide an immediate point of reference.

A founding member may still be a part of your chapter. Dig up an old quartet picture of him, along with a current performance shot, and combine them in a montage. Even better, show him singing with his son or grandson, to establish the link into the present and on into the future.

Make the show the centerpiece of the anniversary

Many chapters celebrate their anniversary with a gala show and anniversary party. It’s a great way of leveraging your historical asset into show-biz value. “Fifty Years of Harmony” is a good hook, with lots of staging and repertoire possibilities. The Society-published “Heritage of Harmony” script can be readily adapted to fit your chapter’s anniversary, too.

An anniversary show is golden opportunity to invite back all the past members who no longer sing with you, as part of a “reunion chorus.” Invite them to attend just three rehearsals of this special group, to brush up on some repertoire gems from years past.

A classic “parade of quartets” would be particularly appropriate for this kind of show. Keep in mind, though, your obligation to provide top-quality entertainment to your audience. You might strike a balance between singing quality and historical tribute by arranging your parade of past quartets into a medley of some sort, with short feature spots filled by the quartets of yore.

Connect your past with your future by involving young singers, from local college and high school choirs, in your show. Your heritage of harmony extends into the future when you help youngsters discover the joy of music. “Teach The Children To Sing” is
particularly appropriate here, tying your commitment to youth outreach into your long-
time commitment to local charities.

**Involve the community in your anniversary**

Make yourself visible by relating your history to your community’s history. A few ways:

- Extend the Award of Harmony program to recognize the “citizen of the half-
century.”
- Contact your county or city historical society to discuss an exhibit of chapter and
quartet memorabilia as an expression of leisure activities in the area. Many
libraries and civic spaces offer exhibit space for community organizations, too.
Donate a copy of the *Heritage of Harmony* songbook to the library.
- Ask the Mayor’s Office to recognize the anniversary with a proclamation of
Harmony Week.
- Find out what other organizations (especially arts, education and social services)
are celebrating anniversaries. Combine forces to present programs touting your
mutual interest in the community.
- Watch the newspaper and classified ads for 50th wedding anniversaries. Invite the
couples to your show at a special rate—*free!* Serenade them with a special love
song for golden anniversaries.

**Look to the future**

Your anniversary is a natural hook for helping you reach out to music educators and
young singers. Point with pride to the many Barbershoppers in the area who are the
product of local school music programs. Show that music is a lifelong recreational
activity, but it must be nurtured at a young age to instill the skills and desire.

Ask how you can help promote vocal music in your educational systems. We’re doing it
to keep the music alive, and to Keep The Whole World Singing—and it starts at home. A
few ways:

- Sponsor a quartet in the MBNA America Collegiate Barbershop Quartet Contest.
- Send students and teachers to Harmony Explosion camps, Harmony College, or
district school.
- Establish a scholarship funded by your fiftieth anniversary show.
- Invite young singers to appear on your show.

Publicize these activities with the phrase, “celebrating the next fifty years of barbershop
harmony.” Be sure to get photos and press coverage of these events, with young singers
alongside older men.