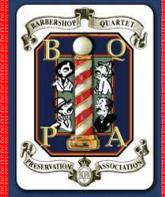


# Barbershop Quartet Preservation Association (BQPA/Pioneers) Newsletter "The Blaze"



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BQPA/Pioneers Website...BQPA.Com

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To the best of my recollection this is the first official Newsletter that has been published by the BQPA. It is hopeful that this publication will make all recipients aware that the BQPA is expanding its presence in the Barbershop community. We are **BLAZE-ing** the trail to return barbershop to what it was in earlier years. Visit our website to get full information about our organization. BQPA.Com. (Continued on page 4)

Sandy, Utah  
Sep 17, 2020

From the Prez

Many thanks to Jack Martin for his generous offer of launching the BQPA/Pioneers bulletin.

As we continue to hunker down in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is tempting to dwell on the opportunities we have lost. Packing ourselves into meeting room, bars, restaurants or other spaces for the purpose of close harmony singing has been a great joy in past years. Suddenly we're deprived of that pastime. Just 'taint fair!

Last week, Raymond Schwarzkopf put together a Zoom meeting for your BQPA/Pioneers Board and a few other members. Not a single note was sung, but we had a great time visiting and catching up on the news, both the hopeful and the sad.

The experience of the virtual get-together made me remember the phenomenon we all have experienced through the years: we came for the music but stayed for the fellowship. That is an almost universal discovery of barbershoppers. We think we are joining a singing organization, but we end up with lifelong friends, who happen to sing. Believe me, I have felt mighty deprived not getting to ring chords with all of you. But I take great comfort in knowing that my BQPA pals are experiencing similar disruption but are coping with things as they arise. It is only a matter of time until we meet again and bust a few seventh chords. And while we cannot control that timeline, we will remain connected in the ways that matter.

Lee Taylor  
President,  
BQPA/Pioneers

## Current BQPA Board of Directors

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### What's happening in the BQPA?

Dealing with COVID-19 has been and remains a challenge. We have essentially been “Locked Down” for the past 7 months. It has been in the best interest of our organization to cancel our Spring and Fall 2020 festivals. The out look for a vaccine is getting closer, however it will probably be spring of 2021 (or later) before we can consider reviving our festivals. Currently our west coast VP is negotiating with hotels in the Phoenix area to lock in times and rates. We are entertaining moving our west festival from April to May in 2021 to avoid the high cost of prime time. Our fall festival remains to be held on the first weekend after Labor Day in 2021.

Our Board of Directors have and will continue to scheduled ZOOM meetings for discussing our best plan of action to get things back to some kind of normalcy. You all are encouraged to join in. Watch your email for an invitation. We are addressing several scenarios and moving slowly to insure our membership is up to date and safe. Please take advantage of this newsletter to stay abreast of our planning and remain in contact with everyone. Submission of articles for the next newsletter is encouraged.

Your Board of Directors

Several years ago Mr. Barbershopper, and our long time friend Ev Nau published an article about the aspect of creating a Barbershop Quartet Association. The article seems to have been inspired by the establishment of BQPA.

## Barbershop Quartet Association

*Just thinking out loud ...*

*In nature, cell division is a way for a life-form to grow and mature. If that is true, then perhaps for “barbershop harmony” to grow and mature, a new organization is needed that services a particular segment of those who participate in this hobby. I had a long talk (actually a long listen, he did most of the talking) with Tom Neal at the Chicago Pioneers meeting’. Tom is a long-time dedicated singer for a certain era of our Society. His business acumen and dedication to what he believes in are both pretty solid. He outlined to me much of what has appeared in his e-mail announcing the formation of a new “Society.”*

*It would seem to me that rather than rail against the idea, Society members would be better served to help the new group survive for it probably will be luring some former singers back to singing what they perceive to be the “true way.” If we truly believe in “Keeping the whole world singing,” then this option seems far more plausible than casting stones at the formation at the founders and the idea itself. Wouldn’t we rather see men find what they want in another group than continue to frustrate those who seek it*

*and feel disenfranchised for whatever reason? Feelings are never right or wrong, they just are. And those feelings run deep, and have so for many years. Think of it as a newly spawned group by SPEBSQSA, not a divorce, and perhaps you will develop a healthier perspective.*

*For an organization that prides itself in “Encouragement,” it would sure seem better to assist than assassinate the new group. We used to see a lot of this type of rhetoric when new chapters were formed and the fear that drove the thinking of those not being involved in the new chapter. Fact is, once the new chapter was formed, both the old and new chapters tended to grow and flourish because there were alternatives being offered for the potential barbershop singer. Many of the founders of the new group are viewed as giant pains in the ass to many in the Society. Now they want to do something they view as positive and remove themselves from that role; and we do what? ... continue to fight with them? What sense does that make?*

*If Tom Neal et al succeed, lets celebrate that and be sure we helped. If they fail, let’s continue to be the safety net for their barbershop experiences. But let’s not be the ones to determine whether they should or should not try.*

*(continued on page 4)*

*(BBS Quartet Association. From page 3 )*

*They have been fairly consistent in their beliefs for many years and are now willing to try to build their own organization. They will have enough problems without the Society adding to them.*

*Tom Neal and company, the best wishes for every success. I may even take a dual membership and try it out. I like choices, not ultimata; alternatives, not directives; action not reaction.*

*To everyone else, let's blow a B-flat and welcome a new organization that just may be what the doctor ordered to solve some of our problems. If they are successful, what a great day that will be! If they're not, perhaps we all will have learned a lesson ... but not at the expense of the fraternity and camaraderie we so often profess and so seldom show when the chips are down.*

*I see a great opportunity before us. We can opt to be proponents of the art form as we claim in our vision, or we can be reactionary to a fault and emulate the same things we claim to see in the potential founders of the organization.*

*It's our choice. And it can be win-win.*  
Ev Nau

*Taken form the twin Cities Hi-Notes, the official news letter of the Kitchener-Waterloo Chapter of SPEBSQSA, December, 2004.*

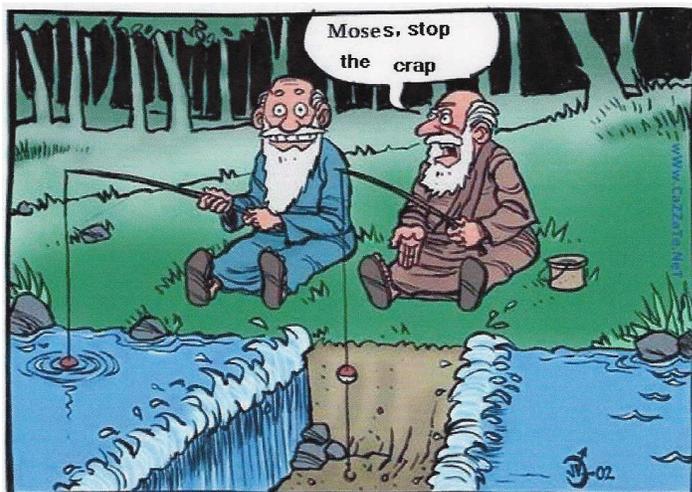
**(Blaze-ing the trail, continued from page 1)**

Looking back at the progress of the BQPA for the past 38 years, we have indeed stuck to our belief that Barbershop is much more than just a style that should be applied to all kinds of music just because it can be. It is the measurement of love and fellowship between folks that encourages and preserves a life style along with the music that promotes good close harmony as it was back in earlier days. It is a way of life! Our roots are deep in the early days of the SPEBSQSA; To improve and enjoy our musicality, not change it!

### Try It, You Will Like It

If you haven't taken the time to visit our BQPA website for a while you will be overjoyed to see how things are changed. The freshness of our new website is both exciting and inviting, and well, it is just great !

The information available is about the same as before but is presented in a very encouraging manner. You will see a wonderful picture of our membership in action and if you look close enough you can maybe see your self smiling and enjoying the activities of one of our quartet festivals of the past. There are numerous pictures of both registered and pickup quartets having a good time. Great stuff !



# BQPA on the move

## BQPA Zoom Meeting 12 Sept. 2020

The BQPA had their first virtual ZOOM meeting in Mid September. There was a total of 18 members participated including the current board members. We all had a good time exchanging greetings, barbs, latest information, etc.

Bernie Esberner hosted the get-together with Raymond Schwarzkopf keeping things moving along. Discussions centered around our perspective future planning for BQPA Festivals while considering the COVID 19 pandemic. Bernie will get a feel for dates and hotels in the Tempe area for the spring of 2121. We are considering moving our Spring festival to May to avoid the prime time and reduce hotel costs.

Having been privy to the recent virtual BHS board meeting we got a brief report of the impact of the cancellation of the 2020 International convention and Jan 21 Mid-Winter Convention. due to the COVID 19 situation. Our look could have been better. We also discussed if the BQPA could absorb the Old Songs library should the BHS go belly up! (Only trying to stay ahead of the game!)

The origination of a BQPA quarterly News Letter to stimulate growth and active membership of the BQPA was discussed and approved. As evidenced by this publication, we are moving on this. It should be noted that everyone at the meeting contributed something to further the vision of the BQPA.

A second ZOOM meeting has been schedule for Saturday night 8:00 PM EST, 26 September.

## BQPA Zoom Meeting 26 Sept. 2020

Our second Zoom meeting was a great success. There was about 30 folks in attendance. Again Bernie Esberner hosted the meeting.

After a brief introduction by Lee Taylor, our president, speaking of how great it was to be together again, things begin to happen. We had a discussion centered around the song recently written, arranged and published by Clay Hine, "It's The Music That Brings Us Together." Raymond played three versions of the song and there was talk about possibly adopting the song by the BQPA for opening our future festivals.

Much of the meeting was devoted to listening to some of the songs performed by the "Sundowners quartet." Both Doug Smith and Dave Brady related some of their experiences with this quartet. It was quite entertaining.

Continued discussion featured the Citations Quartet with Bill Meyers singing bass. Raymond had quite a time getting Bill hooked up so we could here him, but was at last successful. Bill sang with the Citation for 10 years and related a few experiences he had singing with them to included some that were a bit scary while flying to gigs over the years. Bill also sang with the Bluegrass Student Union for President Ronald Reagan in the oval office. He also won a gold medal with "Revival" back in 1998.

This second ZOOM meeting lasted 2 hours with only a couple folks having to leave early. Our next ZOOM meeting is schedule for sometime around Thanksgiving centered on more serious BQPA business.

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF QUARTETTING by BOB DYKSTRA

I joined the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement I of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America in 1953 as a member of the Junction City, Kansas Chapter while stationed at Fort Riley. I transferred to the Minneapolis, Minnesota chapter in 1955, where I am now in my 68<sup>th</sup> year of Society membership. Needless to say, during my lengthy Barbershop career, I've seen some major changes in SPEBSQSA, one of which is reflected in the name change to the Barbershop Harmony Society. Dropping "Quartet" from the organization name certainly has gone hand in hand with the increasing emphasis on choruses and chorus competition and subsequent decline in casual quartet activity. That's why we dyed-in-the-wool quartetters need BQPA, the Friday Lunch Bunch That Meets On Thursday, and similar groups and organizations to satisfy our cravings for woodshedding and for joining three other guys or gals in singing the old standards that we have enjoyed for so many years.

I consider the 1950s to be the Golden Age of Quartetting in the United States. Remember the popularity of quartets at that time representing a wide variety of musical styles: the Mills Brothers, Chordettes, Four Freshmen, Blackwood Brothers, Crew Cuts, Beach Boys, Cities Service Green and White Quartet, Buffalo Bills, Mariners, Ames Brothers, Maple City Four, and Cracker Jills, just to name a few.

This was also the Golden Age of Quartetting in SPEBSQSA. In Minneapolis, our chapter meetings consisted of gang singing, while comfortably seated (rather than standing on risers), tag quartetting, pickup quartet contests, enjoying an adult beverage or two, and often being entertained by a chapter or visiting quartet. Following our meeting we'd stop at a nearby pub for a beer and a burger and some impromptu singing before heading for Cardozo's Furniture Store, the entrance to which served as a perfect quartet shell for singing a few final songs and busting a few more chords before finally calling it a night. How did the Society bigwigs or anybody for that matter think they could improve upon our "boy's night out"?

As an example of Barbershopping in the

1950s, the March 1956 issue of the Harmonizer included a page picturing the Minneapolis Chapter's 12 registered quartets including the Gay Nineties, Atomic Bums, Hut Four, Lake-Aires, and Ewald Golden Guernseys. Recall that the first International chorus contest had been held only two years previously, so quartetting still reigned supreme in most chapters.

One need look no further than annual chapter show programs to discover the relative emphasis awarded quartets and choruses. Most annual shows at the time were labeled "Parades of Quartets." I recently moved from my home of fifty years to a senior housing facility and had to throw out a lot of memorabilia collected over almost forty years of quartet singing. Included were many show programs that I had retained for some reason or another. A couple of them especially caught my eye. The first was a program from the 1952 Minneapolis show which preceded my membership in the chapter but somehow fell into my possession. The show was held in Northrop Auditorium on the University of Minnesota campus with a crowd of more than 4,000 in attendance, and was truly a Parade of Quartets. It featured six chapter quartets including the very popular Atomic Bums as well as the Chordettes of Arthur Godfrey Television and Radio Show fame; the Schmitt Brothers, reigning SPEBSQSA quartet champions; the Four Mor, an entertaining quartet from Madison, Wisconsin; the Gay Nineties from Montevideo, Minnesota; and the Four Corners from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Then at the last moment, the Four Teens, an air force quartet that four months later was destined to be crowned the 1952 International Barbershop Quartet Champion, found themselves in the area and were added to the list of performers. And.....just in case you're wondering.....the Minneapolis Chapter Chorus also sang a few numbers. I wonder how long that show went on.....

The show I just described was typical of Barbershop shows of the day. Large chapters in metropolitan areas often drew very large crowds for their annual shows and brought in top Barbershop quartet talent from throughout the United States and Canada. For example, the 1961 Pasadena Show on which my quartet, the Hut Four, sang, performed to sellout crowds on both Friday and Saturday nights. Their quartet lineup, in addition to the Hut Four, included two past International champions, (Buffalo Bills and Evans Quartet), a soon-to-be International champion, (the Gala Lads), (continued on page 7)

two current International medalists, (the Saints and the Bay Town Four), and the soon-to-become-famous Osmond Brothers. The chapter chorus sang to open both halves of the show, but again it was clearly a Parade of Quartets.

Just one more example. In March of 1960 we sang on the Pittsburgh annual show at Carnegie Music Hall. Had the chapter used only its own quartets they would have featured the 1948 International champions, the Pittsburghers, the soon-to-be International Champs, the Town and Country Four, and three district medalists. As was the custom of the day, however, they rounded out the show by bringing in the Hut Four, the International medalist Short Cuts from Miami, and the 1958 Queens of Harmony from Chicago, the Sweet and Lows. These were indeed the golden days of quartetting.

Smaller chapters in smaller cities also featured Parades of Quartets. If their budget wouldn't support bringing in "name" quartets from a distance they simply selected from a ready supply of district or other closer-by foursomes. I mentioned that in 1956 the Minneapolis Chapter had 12 registered quartets. At least 8 of those appeared on LO'L District shows. Because quartetting was so popular and was a major focus of chapter meetings, most chapters had quartets that were entertaining and anxious to sing whenever called upon. So even those with limited financial resources were able to put together an appealing Parade of Quartets.

After chorus competition grew in popularity the focus of chapter meetings changed. More and more time was spent on vocal techniques, perfecting the music and choreography of two contest songs, and putting together a chorus repertoire. Annual shows gradually but consistently featured choruses more and more and quartets less and less and the Parade of Quartets morphed into a Chorus Concert with a quartet or two rounding out the show. The Golden Age of Quartets was now little more than a memory.

An anecdote illustrates this change. A new chapter chartered in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area in 1986 proclaiming a single vision, "Fun Through Musical Excellence." This vision was accompanied by a major focus on chorus excellence in performance and competition. Annual shows reflected this emphasis as the chapter chose to feature the chorus and its own chapter quartets rather than bringing in headline quartets from the "outside." A good friend of mine who was one of the founders of the new

chapter approached me about purchasing tickets for his show. Being a quartet aficionado who had so thoroughly enjoyed the Parades of Quartets era, I told him I wouldn't buy a show ticket until his chapter brought in at least one headline quartet. After all, I was used to hearing or appearing on shows with a multitude of quartets. I stood by my words and it was a number of years before the new chapter met my conditions for attendance so I could finally be in the audience. The relative emphasis on choruses and quartets had clearly changed drastically during my many decades of membership in SPEBSQSA.



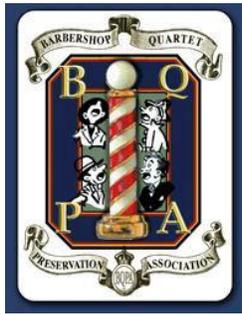
It has been my pleasure to bring to you this quarterly newsletter along with the writings of many of our BQPA members.

Lee Taylor's welcome letter leaves little to be desired as well as the message from our Board of Directors. Ev Nau will always be remembered as a good friend of the BQPA/Pioneers. It's too bad that the BHS didn't pay attention to his words of wisdom, however the BQPA/Pioneers has succeeded on our own.

Our ZOOM meetings have been a Godsend, giving us all the opportunity to communicate effectively. We have been able to regenerate enthusiasm in spite of our lockdown status brought on by the COVID 19 situation.

Bob Dykstra's journey through the Golden Age of Quartetting reminds us of the wonderful era our organization is preserving. And last but not least, the remembrance of our brothers who have passed.





## Missing Voices – Departed Friends

We've lost some wonderful voices over the years, some, perhaps, to the pandemic Corona-virus. This list is always too long, but we rejoice in the belief that these voices have joined the "Chorus Eternal". These are names we would have mentioned at our most recent gatherings, but for the pandemic... Tom Noble, Immediate Past President, BQPA

- Ed Simons has passed away. He was formerly our BPQA/Pioneers membership assistant, receiving new member applications, passing along the forms and sending back membership pins. It's a while since he was able to attend; he'll be missed.
  - Pat Tyree, Pete's wife, died on September 8<sup>th</sup>. It's been a while since she was with us, and we send our sympathies to Pete and their family.
  - Gerry Kelly, the lead singer of the great Roaring 20's quartet, died earlier in 2020.
  - Renee Craig left our world May 8<sup>th</sup>. Lead of the ground-breaking Cracker Jills quartet, arranger, judge, coach, director, songwriter, barbershop educator – the consummate barber-shopper and all-around superb musician. Sweet Adeline's Queen of Harmony and director of the three-time champion Ramapo Valley chorus.
  - Cal Yoder, lead of the Rural Route 4, 1986 SPEBSQSA Champs. Teller of great stories and teacher of great tags...
  - Don Clause has passed on. He was a judge, a director, and a coach of great renown, encouraging many very accomplished quartets.
  - Freeman Groat, 75-year member of SPEBSQSA and the first ever Lifetime Member – a long-time volunteer at Harmony Hall, working tirelessly on the Old Songs Library project for the Society.
  - Eddy Ryan, tenor of The Easternaires for more than 20 years, passed away in early December of 2019. He was the last man standing – the end of an era...
  - John Hansen, bass of the Hut 4 and the Salty Dogs, passed away October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019. His quartets sang from the early 1950s into the early 2000s. The Hut 4 included BQPA/Pioneers members Bob Dykstra and Bob Spong. One of his favorite songs was "Gorilla My Dreams"...
- Elsie Revis, BQPA/Pioneers member and wife of our long-time photographer, Cal, died in May of 2019.

Let's sing a reverent version of The Old Songs, or The Irish Blessing, in their memory.  
Someone blow a B-flat...