



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

August 2021 - Issue #28

President's Message:

By Nancy Hennefer

What a wild ride it has been. The threat of an evil virus on its way, the reality of it actually arriving, locking down, social distancing, masks, canceled and postponed activities. Just as we thought we could take a collective breath, we can't breathe (literally) due to smoke in the air, warnings of the Delta Variant increasing and many people running out of patience. As we, the Stockton Portsmen, have been meeting together the last few weeks, a small slice of normalcy is back.

We have welcomed in new members Alan and Brad and rejoiced to have Steve back! Al W. stepped in and did a great job directing when Bill was absent. We are attacking some songs that we have been singing forever, but with a closer eye (and ear) on singing them correctly. Upcoming performances are still unclear, but you can add Dec. 4th to your calendar as we have been invited to sing at the Festival of Trees again. Our Portsmen Christmas Tree is itching to get put back up and represent barbershop harmony at the Festival. There is also the hope of singing again at the Fox Theater during their Holiday movie season.

Pre-thanks and appreciation to John Eilers for, once again, graciously hosting our Annual Portsmen BBQ on Saturday, August 28th, 1-4. Don't forget to RSVP Dave Harmon!

Finally, and possibly most importantly, our Nominating Committee of Al W, Joan and Al F, is trying to secure the 2021-22 slate of officers. Because our chorus has shrunk considerably the last couple of years, it's important that everyone gives thought to what you can contribute. This is YOUR chorus, that needs YOUR energy and commitment!

Sending Love Notes,

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Musical Director's Message: By Bill Litz

Our rehearsal environment has been so different in the past couple of months. I admit, I've been unsure of what methods to use and what things to work on since the face of the chorus has changed so much. That being less people in general, and those people having either a lot of barbershop experience, or almost no experience. In the past, new people would have been in a *sink or swim* situation, hopefully learning from the people around them, but not being key player. The chain being as strong as the weakest link....from a barbershop knowledge, half the people are the weakest link – and maybe even more than half, because even many Portsmen veterans have been singing barbershop for less than a decade. And their training WAS *sink or swim*!!!

It's exciting to actually focus on EACH AND EVERY singer's skill level. All of us can improve our skill set, so an approach of singing less songs and leaving no soldier behind in the learning process is being good for all of us. In a larger chorus setting, there is a lot of chance for singers to just try to sing along with the group making for a rough, sloppy, unsynchronized sound. Maybe the biggest learning is in your director's realization that we need to polish everyone's skills and not lean so much on individuals. As each of you show confidence and put your energy into our musical style, we all have a better time and create magical musical moments.

Vocal music depends on the vocal delivery of a song – songs are made up of notes and words. But what brings those notes and words into something meaningful is phrasing. I enjoyed reading an article about that phrasing that reinforces what we should be keeping in mind. Phrasing is the technical foundation for bringing emotion to the song.

Phrasing: What It Is and Why It's Important for Your Singing

A phrase is a sentence or part of a sentence. According to dictionary.com, it is "two or more words that express an idea and are a part of a sentence," or "a small group of words standing together as a conceptual unit, typically forming a component of a clause."

As we create a wall of continuous sound, each word and syllable has a different weight, accent, or volume that when executed allow the individual sounds to become an artistic communication. Sometimes steps to develop consistent phrasing seem simplistic, and can even be boring, but we as an ensemble need to come to agreement on how to deliver phrases. We focus on developing phrasing by:

- Speaking the lyrics is a good start to understand the inflections that we all take for granted in our normal speech. As we sing, we tend to flatten out those changes in weight creating an uninteresting delivery.

- Studying the Vowels and Consonants used in the songs so we can match our sound, choosing the shapes that best communicate the message and allow for tuning our harmonies.
- Knowing where to breathe and where not to breathe – energizing the end of a phrase is something that creates drama and gives understanding to the words we are singing.
- Using dynamics to emphasize important words and to build and release tension in the full delivery of a song.
- Being visually involved from the very beginning in learning a new song. Often that visual plan will create opportunities for different phrasing.

I look forward to each week as we develop our talents, communicating through an engaged process where we encourage each other to sing better, reaping the reward of making beautiful harmony that it takes every one of us to achieve.

DEVELOPING THE CHAPTER

BY AL WOLTER (VP MEMBERSHIP/CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT)

This past month has been one of the busiest, exciting and frustrating months of Barbershop Leadership I have had in a long time. With the processing of two new members and trying to get a third processed under the new Members Only System and cleaning up things caused by the new roll-out, as well as trying to develop a new slate of Officers to nominate for next year's Board of Directors, it has been all those things.

Don't get me wrong – there are a lot of positives in that. I surely understand the new relational Members Database better (well understand might not be the fully correct term – but I get it). The Nominating Committee has some names for each position to mull over before presenting it to President Nancy and the Board. Most importantly, we have three new additions to the Chapter / Chorus, well one is a returnee – but its sure nice.

So now, let's look a little at the future – what do we need to do to continue developing the Chapter. There has always been lots of ideas about this, that and the other thing – if we did it, then things will be better / easier. The idea is that there is a systemic reason why the Chapter isn't growing: Not enough work, need new songs, need to change what we call ourselves. There is some truth and value to all those things. Unfortunately, we are not the only Chapter / organization that is going through what we are. The Barbershop Society membership has seen a steady decline in membership over the past thirty years (yeah – we have talking about this that long), but so has all the other Service Organizations (Elks, Moose, VFW, American Legion, etc.).

If there is a systemic issue, it is with the whole societal fabric of the American population. In the 1930's, with the advent of radio, community singing declined. It was that decline that led to O.C. Cash to form S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. in 1938. Still people's lives were not filled with all the distractions that they are today – they gathered together to celebrate each other and to fill in their free time. Not long ago, a 'Fast Money' question on "Family Feud" asked about 'free time', the Number One Answer from 100 people was ZERO. The majority of those 100 people said they have absolutely NO FREE TIME.

Well it won't matter if we work ourselves to death making each and every song perfect, learning a new song every week, become the A'Capella Angles or whatever – if folks have no free time, they are not going to find new ways to consume their time. Even if we have the time of our lives – the most fun we have ever had, they can't afford to try to join in.

Sad and a bit scary, isn't it? I know, I too am asking myself; "Well then what's the point? How and why are we talking about developing the Chapter with a situation like that?" My feelings are that first, we need to understand the environment we exist in and be happy with what we have. While it is okay to desire more, we can't drive ourselves nuts trying to gain something that might not be obtainable. Second, knowing all that, we still try to make what we do as attractive to others as possible, so if they do find a moment of free time and they like to sing – they see us as great option.

Singing as well as we can, with a new song to transfer skills to and that generates excitement in ourselves and others, and having a visibly good time doing it will go a long way. But it will also take effort of each individual, not only in doing the things I just said, but also in talking about us to others as we go about our busy lives, selling tickets to shows and Singing Valentines, being ready to add your voice to the Board of Directors with ideas and suggestions. Lastly, being able to do things for the greater good and not feel bad when suggestions are turned down.

Developing the Chapter might seem to be a one-time thing, but as the world changes – new things need to be developed to assist in keeping us moving forward. Many of us are late to the Social Media game, and some who have been using it are still hesitant to explore all its aspects (and which one is best). Finding ways to utilize this tool is surely a new challenge, but so is living in world of financial uncertainty with pandemic isolations, organizational in-fighting, and the like. How we keep ourselves in business when the opportunities to perform are limited and personal funds are as tight as free time is difficult to answer.

While I like to keep a positive spin on these articles, this last seems just the opposite. But I have faith in our craft, our hobby, in all of you – that no matter the obstacles, we can, will and do find that brotherhood of harmony that brings us together every Tuesday and it will be passed to others that will keep us moving forward – developing the Chapter into future. We have adapted as things changed and we will continue to do so for a good while yet.

Al Wolter, VP Membership/Chapter Development

Quartet Update: Tune Struck



There is just something about this year that has Tune Struck taking large chunks of time apart from each other. Once Greg came home from his traipse around the Country, there were still conflicts preventing us from actually rehearsing.

We did have a wonderful time with Pizza dinner to watch the AIC Internet Show, even though Melinda and Geral were not able to be present.

Good news is that by the time you read this, we will have performed the National Anthem for the Groundbreaking Ceremonies for Victory Gardens Veteran's Facility in French Camp (near the Hospital) and for the Stockton Ports (always great to support our local team – let's hope they won).

As the time is flying – won't be long and Bob will be busy with harvest, but hopefully we can get back on track as there are some interesting opportunities for us in the making.

Intro to Barbershop – Quiz time

Click here to take the quiz:

<https://www.research.net/r/bbshopquiz>

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

We are currently meeting outside in the courtyard without masks.

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

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

See calendar for up-to-date information:

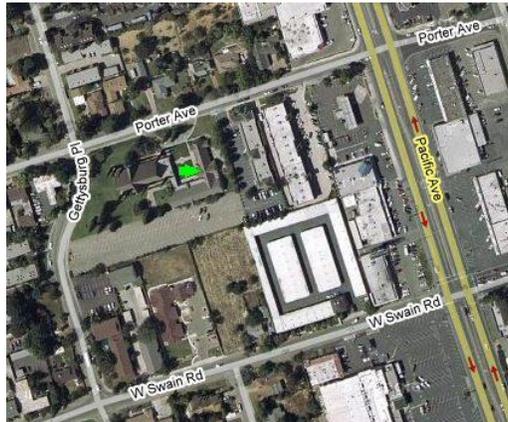
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

Website:

<http://www.stocktonportsmen.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/194542747456>



Directions:

- From Pacific Avenue go west on Porter Way turn south on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into the Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.
- From Pershing Avenue go east on W. Swain Rd turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.

Mission Statement:

Provide the greater Stockton area with quality Barbershop chorus and quartet music and wholesome family entertainment, while encouraging every individual of good character who loves to sing the opportunity to find their place with us.

Hire Us:

Book us for your next event:

- Community Concerts
- Fairs
- Festivals
- Grand Openings
- Holiday Tree Lightings
- Memorial Services
- National Anthem
- Singing Valentines
- Summer Concerts

Performance times usually range from 20 to 40 minutes but can be adjusted up or down to fit your specific program. Contact us by email or phone below for a proposal:

- Info@StocktonPortsmen.org
- Phone (209) 881-SING (7464)

****SAVE THE DATE****

- 10/7 – 10/10 FWD Fall Convention (Gilbert, AZ)
- 10/22 Harmony Camp 2021
- 12/4 Festival of Trees
- 3/10 – 3/13 FWD Spring Convention: Prelims, SE/SW Divisions
- 3/20 Stockton Portsmen Ice Cream Social
- 5/13 – 5/14 NE/NW Divisions Convention

Barbershop Links

- Barbershop Harmony Society <http://www.barbershop.org/>
- Far Western District <https://www.farwesterndistrict.org/>
- Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association <https://www.mixedbarbershop.org/>
- VoCal Voices of California <http://voicesofcalifornia.org/>