



# The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsman  
January/February 2022 - Issue #31



## President's Message: By Al Wolter

### THE VIEW FROM THE HELM



EMERGENCY BACK!

What a difference a month or so makes, eh?

The core premise of my first ***View for the Helm*** still holds true, but the pandemic killed the need for both **Valentine** and **Ice Cream Social** sales – but we have not been grounded on the shoals.

I started writing this on Tuesday February First – a great day for me, as it is my wife's birthday and the day we get back together since the Christmas Party and day we can finally recognize the folks that make the past two years bearable.

As I was doing my morning routine, thinking about our time together and what all needs to occur, my mind was full of things I needed to share (either tonight or here in this forum). Since I don't want to make the Chapter Meeting time longer than necessary, I want to post some of it here.

One of the things that needs to be pointed out is the Installation Process. In the past, like any good fraternal organization, there has been a formal Installation of Officers. This gives everyone an opportunity to make speeches and cajole each other. This is totally unnecessary – we don't need to swear to uphold the Standard By-Laws against enemies foreign and domestic – just be there to do what needs to be done to keep the Chapter functioning as best as possible. This can be summed up by what is needed to keep us singing as best as possible with as much enjoyment for ourselves and our audiences.

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Well, I am finishing this after our Chapter Meeting, where I had the pleasure to present four awards to rightful recipients. Not in the order presented, we honored *Harry Williams* as the **Barbershopper of the Year** for 2020 (for his attempts to keep our spirits up with his daily emails), *Brad Nieman* as the 2021 **Rookie of the Year**, *Al Farnum* as the **President's Soaring Eagle** (for keeping the Chapter solvent during the pandemic), and *Sue Atkins* as the **Barbershopper of the Year** for 2021 (for her work as the Chapter Secretary and as the Editor of the *Captain's Log*). This act is one of the best that a President has the pleasure of completing.

While the attendance was a little less than normal, not surprising for the first time back, we made some decent music and had a good time. These are for me, the two major building blocks for a Chapter: singing well and having a good time. As we traverse our course of harmony, keeping these off the bow is always a good idea.

One item of interest that came up was the fact that while we are not actively selling Valentines, we have received two requests for them that four of us think we can fill. The outstanding question is what protocols will the buyer/recipient's want us to follow. Though we may have had to slow our ship down, it's good to know we still have a little steerageway happening.

There are also some interesting things being considered, the upcoming Spring Contests being held here in Stockton May 13 & 14 and an inquiry from the *California Delta Chapter (VoCal)* to have a show with us here in Stockton. There has also been an inquiry made by the *Stockton Ports* regarding Anthem singing. There is always the chance that we might be asked to sing for **Memorial Day** by a local Cemetery or Veteran's organization. So appropriately we will be working on songs that can be used for any of those situations.

I fully expect a lot of course input to come from our Music Team, the first meeting to be held after the Chapter Meeting February 8. With a dynamic leader like our past Rookie, Soaring Eagle, BOTY recipient at the helm and a goodly mix of experience and youth, I have high expectations regarding the answers to our inquiries.

There is always more to say, just ask Bill and Sue (and Nancy H.), but I will save more for later.

## **Musical Director's Message:** **By Bill Litz**

Getting a focus after struggling through COVID has been difficult. We've added new members, which is great! We've lost members for various reasons which is sad. It's been so long since we've worked on our repertoire songs that it feels like we are starting over. We did have the opportunity to perform patriotic songs in 2021 and enjoyed performing Christmas songs during the holidays which helped us focus on music to work on.

Since we haven't learned a new song in two years, let's talk a little bit about music selection. Here are things I like to consider when selecting music.

- Is it a song that is needed in our repertoire?  
It is important in developing our rep to have a mix of styles.
  - UP-TEMPO - A fast-tempo song that would be appropriate to start or close a performance
  - EASY-BEAT - A medium tempo "toe tapper" song that would be appropriate in the middle of a performance
  - BALLAD - A slow song, often in and out of tempo with more focus on the harmony than the rhythm
  - SWING - A tempo driven song that may be slow, medium, or fast, but the primary element is the swing/syncopated feel of the song
  - NOVELTY – A song that usually uses humor or parody to be entertaining
  - PATRIOTIC – A song that expresses devotion to and vigorous support for our country – we have many opportunities to perform these types of songs
  - RELIGIOUS – A song with an interest, a belief, or an activity that is very important to a person or group – in the Barbershop Harmony Society, we try not to force a singular belief on our membership or our audience, but there are songs that cross the boundaries of doctrine
  - CHRISTMAS – Songs that can be done in the holiday season – we try to do standard Christmas carols that our audience recognize and expect, but it is important to have songs that cater to an audience (and singers) with different religious convictions
  - SHOW TUNES – The definition of barbershop says that our songs should be relatively simple melodies that can be done by the average singer. But many top-level choruses lean toward a show chorus mentality by doing highly choreographed songs that might be a medley of show tunes or an emotional rendering epic arrangement
- Is it a song we would enjoy singing? – it takes a strategy to select songs that we enjoy singing
  - CONSIDER VOCAL RANGE – Is each part in a singable range for our average member (or better yet, for ALL our members)? Sometimes we select songs that stretch our range, but we need to be careful to have most of our songs in ranges that we can sing successfully

- DIFFICULTY – We need to feel challenged sometimes, but we need to always be successful – We want songs that have musical interest, but also are singable by our membership. Having a few songs that challenge us is good for growth, but it is important that most songs are ones that we do well – they should be easily remembered, and arrangements that EVERY member can sing successfully. Use quarteting situations to get the right quality of performers to do something more difficult
- MAINTAIN A VARIETY OF SONGS – Take opportunities to try different tempos and types of music that insert barbershop style into jazz, classical, doo-wop, blues, rock as well as the traditional barbershop songs that we are trying to preserve
- MAINTAIN A WHOLESOME RATING – There are hundreds of songs available for the chorus to sing, so there is no reason that we need to do something that anyone could consider inappropriate
- MAKE IT FUN FOR ALL – Some arrangements and styles can be boring or repetitive for voice parts. Acapella groups typically have a focus on the melody with a simple bass line and uninteresting harmony parts. Find arrangements that are appealing and singable for all the voice parts. In our *mixed* environment, special attention needs to be given to making sure that the songs fit both men and women’s vocal ranges and thought process
- IS IT A SONG SOMEONE REQUESTED? – A show committee could want songs for a specific show. Or a member might know of a song or have a favorite that they’ve always wanted to do.
- Is it a song the audience will enjoy?
  - IS IT RECOGNIZABLE? – Our audience will appreciate our harmony if they can identify the melody we are singing, although it is not necessary for EVERY song that we do to be something our audience knows
  - IS IT A SONG THAT THE GROUP CAN DO WELL – Sometimes simple is better. The audience should enjoy the performance we are delivering and not be “worried” waiting for us to *train wreck*
  - IS IT ENTERTAINING – We need to be able to do the appropriate things to visually bring the song to life. It should also be a song that is honest and believable coming from our membership
  - DOES IT FIT INTO OUR PERFORMANCE? – We have a diverse set of styles, but we need to consider what opportunities we have to perform songs that we learn
- Is it a song that has value for the members outside the chorus?
  - SINGING AT CONVENTIONS – *POLE CAT* songs, *tags*, and *PATRIOTIC* songs are common material known by most barbershoppers so it is worth being familiar with them
  - SINGING WITH LOCAL CHAPTERS – Usually we don’t try to do the same songs as chapters around us, but we do have local gatherings and impromptu contests (like the BEAN FEED or NOVICE) having songs other than POLE CATS can be an advantage (e.g. *What A Wonderful World*, *Irish Blessing* or *The Star Spangled Banner*)

- What is the availability of a song?
  - WHAT IS THE PRICE OF THE SONG? – Custom arrangements are about \$500. A Top-level arrangement (done recently by an international level quartet or chorus runs about \$80 arranger fees and another \$3-5 per copy (about \$150 for the chorus). Arrangements from BHS are \$3 to \$5 a copy (about \$100 for the chorus)
  - ARE LEARNING TRACKS AVAILABLE? – We almost always try to get learning tracks to give our members a tool to help them learn quickly. Custom learning tracks can cost \$250. If the tracks are already in a library, they might be \$80 to \$100. BHS has some songs with tracks priced at \$15

A lot of thought goes into selecting the songs we do. But the biggest consideration is how the membership feels. Each of you has an influence on the songs we do. Make your wishes known or consider being on the music committee.

As we add new music to our repertoire, don't practice until you get it right; practice until you can't get it wrong!

## 2022 Board of Directors

President*	Al Wolter
Secretary	Steve Yund
Treasurer	Al Farnum
VP: Membership/Chapter Development	Dave Harmon
VP: Marketing & PR	Brad Nieman
VP: Music & Performance*	Susan Atkins
Member At Large	Bob Yater
Member At Large	Joan Ray
Immediate Past President	Nancy Hennefer

## Portsmen Chorus Leadership

Director*	Bill Litz
Assistant Director	Joan Ray
Tenor Section Leader*	Joan Ray
Lead Section Leader*	Al Farnum
Baritone Section Leader*	Nancy Hennefer
Bass Section Leader*	Brad Nieman

*\*Members of the Music Committee*

**Rookie of the Year  
Brad Nieman**



**Soaring Eagle  
Al Farnum**



**2021 Barbershopper of the Year  
Harry Williams**



**2021 Barbershopper of the Year  
Sue Atkins**



## Weekly Chapter Meetings:

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

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

See calendar for up-to-date information:

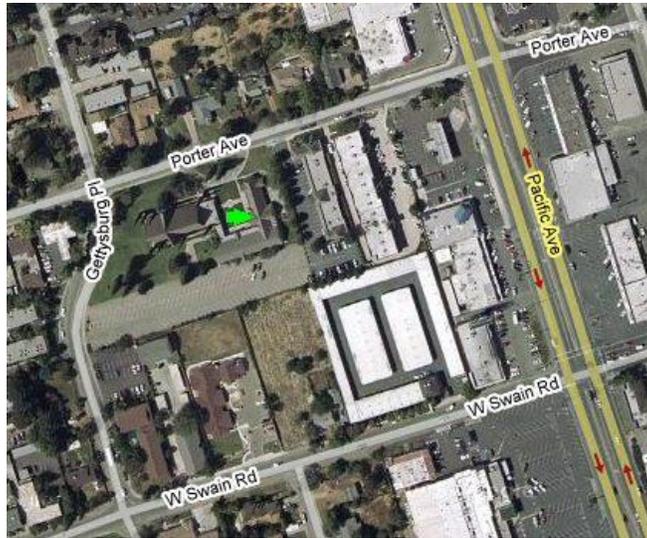
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

### 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](mailto:Info@StocktonPortsmen.org)
- Phone (209) 881-SING (7464)

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

- 5/13 – 5/14 FWD Spring Prelims, Chorus & Quartet Festival
- 7/3 – 7/10 International Convention (Charlotte, NC) [Link to see jam-packed schedule](#)
- 10/12 FWD Fall Convention (Fresno, CA)

### **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/>