



The Captain's Log

Newsletter of the Stockton Portsmen

September 2025 - Issue #73



September always feels like the “reset button” of the year. The heat of summer begins to fade, thoughts of lesson planning ramp up (thank you, retirement!) Christmas decorations are already available at Costco and for us Portsmen, thoughts turn to contest prep and soon, the familiar sound of holiday songs.

This past summer was full — from Celebrate America to our annual picnic, an appearance on TV, an anthem sing and others. But sadly, also a time of saying see-you-later to some members who have chosen to take a break (hopefully, not goodbye!) Now it's time to channel our energy into what's next. Fall is contest season, and it's also the season when our community events pick up: patriotic appearances, fall concerts, and rehearsals that matter a little more each week. We have been challenged with Bill's initiative “Polish the Pitch”. It started with a survey, personalized for some honest self-assessment. Next was recording ourselves during rehearsal and submitting that to Sue and Bill for critiquing. Scary, yes, but very valuable! Kind of like a relationship that is now beyond the small talk, and is getting to the real you. Watching yourself on the rehearsal recordings is another look in that 3-way mirror. Expression, posture, subtle moves that convey the words you are singing.

But here's the thing, it's not just about polishing a performance for the judges. It's about what happens in the room. Each rehearsal is a chance to grow, connect, and prepare to bring joy to our audience whether it's a convention crowd, a hometown event or a private request.

So, let's welcome September with renewed purpose. Bring your voice. Bring your heart. And let's sing our way into autumn together.

Ciao!

Sending Love Notes
nance

Musical Director's Message:

By Bill Litz

We're in the home stretch before contest season. But before anyone breaks into a cold sweat over their starting note, let's keep things in perspective.

Contest prep is not about perfection, it's about **consistency**. It's about showing up, week after week, and letting the music settle into your bones until it's second nature. The judges aren't looking for robots; they're looking for connection, artistry, and joy.

That's where our *Perfect the Pitch* recordings come in. This month we'll be focusing on **When She Loved Me** and **Let's Go Fly a Kite**. The process is simple, but powerful:

- **Make** personal recordings during rehearsal while the chorus is singing.
- **Listen** back on your own to spot strengths and areas to polish.
- **Submit** recordings for **director review** so we can give you focused feedback.
- **Use** video, too, to evaluate your visual performance — your face, posture, and body language are just as important as your sound.

Now, here's something important: when you hit "*record*," you'll probably feel your pulse quicken and your breath tighten. That nervousness is normal, and it's valuable. Recording simulates the kind of pressure you feel on stage. The more you practice singing through it, the less power those nerves will have when contest day arrives. Think of each recording as a mini-performance where you train yourself to stay focused and expressive, even when the red light is on.

Recording doesn't have to be complicated

Here's a quick guide:

On iPhone (Voice Memos app):

1. Open **Voice Memos** (built-in app).
2. Tap the **red circle** to start recording.
3. Tap again to stop — the file saves automatically. Rename your file ("When She Loved Me – YourName").
4. To share: tap the recording → **Share** → choose **Messages** (text) or **Mail** (email).

On Android (Voice Recorder app):

1. Open **Voice Recorder** (or search "Recorder" on your phone).
2. Tap the **Record** button.
3. Stop when finished; it saves automatically. Rename your file.
4. To share: tap the recording → **Share** → pick **Text** or **Email**.

And remember — the real magic doesn't just happen on Tuesday nights. Contest readiness is built in those quiet daily moments — at home, in the car, or on a walk — when you take 10 or 15 minutes to review your part, check your pitch, or run through lyrics. Daily, bite-sized practice creates muscle memory, strengthens breath control, and builds confidence that no one-night rehearsal can replace. If everyone does a little work outside rehearsal, our chorus will multiply those efforts into a powerful performance on stage.

These tools are not about “catching mistakes.” They're about helping each of us become more aware of what we bring to the chorus, vocally and visually, and giving us the chance to adjust before we hit the contest stage.

If each singer takes ownership of this process, we'll walk into contest not just with confidence in our voices, but with a unified presence that communicates joy to the audience and judges alike.

Let's put in the work now so that, whether it's contest time or a community sing-out, we can simply step on stage and share the music.



September Birthday Celebrations

Chuck Roots – 9/5

Al Farnum – 9/20



FWD Senior Singers

If you're 55+ we invite you to join the official "FWD Senior Singers" Chorus and compete in the Fall Contest!

Registration is now open for singers 55+ of all genders who are members of a Far Western District chapter and want to sing at the Fall District Convention and Contest in Fresno, California on October 9 - 12, 2025.

[Link to FWD Senior Chorus](#)

Join us for a set from our a Cappella Chorus & participate in our fundraiser!

Quartets: Want to perform your contest set? We invite you to perform at the show!

FREE SHOW & FUNDRAISER FOR STAY TUNED CHORUS

September 20, 2025 at 1:00pm (doors at 12:30)
Royal Stage Theater, 6174 Sunrise Blvd, Citrus Heights
CONTACT: StayTunedChorus@gmail.com

Tune Struck

With a twenty-plus year history and seven registered members, it's good that we all still get along. It's always a treat to sing with our original Baritone; **Steve Taylor**, and we truly miss **Greg Hedges**, but with him in Kansas our ability to sing with him is greatly diminished.

After **Chuck Roots** arranged for us to sing for the Manteca Legion Hall Re-dedication, he asked if we would join him in Knight's Ferry to celebrate a **Alverina's** 100th Birthday. How could we say no, especially since **Steve** was in Colorado.

The venue was the Knight's Ferry Community Hall, with a nice little stage, that was full of friends and relatives, happily chatting away. While this isn't always the greatest type of audience, the Birthday-girl was very interested in our presentation.





After our presentation, we talked with some of the attendees, sharing a tag with guy from the Placerville area and singing '*The Story of the Rose*' to a young lady that is a music student and was very interested in what we do. As we sang, she became very emotional.

She recovered and was pleased to join us for a photo, so I guess we weren't that bad.



Next month, Version Four is scheduled to sing the Anthem for the Ports and 90th birthday.

Four Heaven's Sake

A Barbershop Quartet

John Hunt

Steve Lund

Dave Harmon

Willys Nitschke

UPDATE: 8-12-25

Four Heaven's Sake did it again. We are finding a niche singing for celebrations of our senior citizens. I mean...why not? We sing for each other...Right?? This time a former co-worker of both John's and Steve's (Ren) reached out for a 90th birthday celebration for one of her family friend's, Pat. Pat is anything but "Senior-like!" She has energy and a giving spirit that made us appreciative of the opportunity to sing for her and just two others (the people who called us). Doing something that yields goodwill has so many rewards! We brought joy to the audience...even a hint of a tear on one occasion during a love song. Pat praised us mightily and beamed a bright smile. Ren later shared in a text: "What a treat. I think I enjoyed it more than Pat."



Neurologists extoll the benefits of what music and singing do for the human brain. And learning songs is a great way to make friends. That's why we are always encouraging others to find a few folks and sing! So, do it *Four Heaven's Sake*!

Portsmen Picnic



THE BUSINESS OF BARBERSHOP



We just want to sing, right? So, what's with this business stuff? Well, even though religion and politics are expressly prohibited from being introduced into the affairs of BHS, they surround us – an inevitable part of life, so true is business. It is hard for us to be able to enjoy our singing without music, a place to gather, protection in case someone gets hurt, etc. To ensure all these things are there; the business of the Chapter, District, Society is necessary.

As much as most would like to leave it all to someone else, like the folks gullible or crazy enough to be elected to the Board of Directors, we all need to be aware of how each entity works.

As a long-time member, I have seen the awareness of how things work wane more and more, some of that is due to lack of sharing by those "that do," some is from the fact that more people just are unaware how things work in general. Again, lot stems from the fact that the Society's training is not that tangible. Back in the day, there were Chapter Officer Training Schools (COTS) that all elected officers were to attend, the name was changed to Leadership Academy, but fewer and fewer folks went to the weekend long event. Part of that stemmed from the fact that it was mostly the same thing that re-elected individuals knew already, the other was the time commitment. Since these went the way of the dodo, the only option to learn them are the on-line information pieces on the BHS 'Members Only' site.

But let's be honest, who wants to spend an hour or more, first searching for them and then trying to make them make sense to you? Still, the Chapter needs each and every member have a working knowledge of how things work. As the senior statesmen, I feel it rests on my shoulders to try and impart a little of what I see as important.

First, if you are new, I suggest you review some of my past articles in the Captain's Log, as I tried to impart a lot of this kind of information over the years already. But to recap, the purpose the Society is to ensure each Chapter is on the same page, giving guidance and direction to the Districts and Chapters.

Next, the Districts are the collective for regional Chapters, ensuring the Society's concepts are adopted while relating to the area's needs. When the Society was large, had more members and thus Chapters and Quartets, it kept the Society from being overwhelmed with requests for that guidance. As I have shared in the past, as a 501.c.3

non-profit organization, there are requirements for gatherings to elect Board Members, and ratify decisions (like spending plans). Contests were really created to encourage folks to attend these events.

Being able to provide collective pricing for insurance and copyright protections, is really the crux for the purpose of BHS, in my humble opinion. These days, the Contest is really the focal point for the Far Western District (now I will say that my experience with other Districts is limited), but with the HOD Meeting being on-line, the real need to travel is limited, other than the Contest. Oh, the biggest expenses for FWD? The Conventions!

Now, one of the traits of the human condition is competitiveness – we all want to know who does things the best. Does long run, there are those that will forcefully say yes – yet as the scores get higher, the membership gets smaller. Not sure the business model is working as expected.

Still, that is all well and good for the big picture, but what about Chapter business and my(your) place in it? Besides those on the Board, what is needed from the regular member?

The business of the Chapter needs funding, and the start of the funding is a member's dues. Just a reminder, there are three pieces to your dues: Society, District and Chapter. Focusing on the dues for the Chapter, they are designated as 'unrestricted' and thus can be used for any need. They are also known as 'Social Funds' as they can be used for member activities.

The other side of the Chapter's funding is known as 'Operating Funds' or 'restricted' – those moneys collected from the public, from shows, Valentines, and other performances. Restricted funds can be used to pay rent, buy music, rent performance venues, pay for the director and coaching.

One of the reasons I started this missive is the lack of interest in serving on the Board, but the kicker that pushed it over my reluctance is the need to sell tickets. While we are flush with Operating Funds, one of the by-products of selling tickets is a sizeable audience. The past years, even before COVID, our audiences left some to be desired. After each show, we have happy with what we did – even this past Disney show, where many of us were still struggling with words. Yet, many of us have been hesitant to get our family and friends to come to the show. We also have yet to find effective ways to publicize our events to bring in new-to-us/barbershop individuals.

I have been seeing Facebook and Instagram posts about various groups shows, even open invites to sing with a group. These are business activities that could help us become stronger and more sustaining.

The issue is who is going to make these things happen? How can we get things to the point where we feel comfortable selling/giving away tickets. Who will run these open invites on-line to those who like to sing? Who is stepping up to serve on the Board. Most of the Chapter Board members have been serving for years and the Annual Chapter Meeting is set for September 17th where the Nominating Committee will have submitted a slate of Officers to be elected. Will your name be on it?

What I Did On My Summer Vacation

(or My Experience as a First Time Enrollee at Harmony University 2025)

by Jesi Eckhardt, Placerville, CA

“An anonymous benefactor has offered you a scholarship to Harmony University. Would you like to go?” Who wouldn’t want to hear those words after a chorus rehearsal? I’ll tell you—I don’t know, because they hit my ears like a gift-wrapped surprise. I talk it over with my husband and he’s excited for me to attend, so I gratefully accept the offer.

When the course listing is released, I take my time and look through everything carefully. I want to make sure my classes are what I need the most. Several titles pique my interest, some of which are at conflicting times, but there is still plenty to fill the daily schedule. My course selection:

How To Be A Great Tenor: Absolutely. That’s one of my goals.

Harmony University Chorus? Without question.

Musicality Methods: Sounds heady, but my heart craves this.

Vocal Excellence Outside of Barbershop? Hmm—rather mysterious, but...

Tim Waurick!

I’m all registered and ready to go! My three chorusmates who are going had also signed up for HU Chorus and they are all alumni, so I have plenty of advice moving forward, like:

"You’ll need to have the chorus songs memorized, but everyone holds the spots for the General Session songs, so study accordingly;

Make sure you get enough rest through the week and start drinking lots of water a few days before we leave;

Bring your own sheets and blanket, because the bedding provided is just okay."
My favorite bit of advice comes from someone not going this time:
"Stay up late every night singing tags, because that's where you'll have the most fun."

It's Sunday, Day 1 of HU 2025: We're sitting in the main auditorium where all the General Sessions are to take place. This is a Welcome Party, with singing and games. Gold medal performers, Kim Newcomb, Blaire Brown, Ryan Wisniewski and Tyler Wigginton are on stage asking for two volunteers from each voice part to be in a Tag Quartet. The song is "Sweet and Lovely". Dave nudges me. I lean in and reply, "I'm feeling timid." Seven seconds later, I jump up and quickly make my way to the stage. Timid... REALLY? There's NO WAY I'm passing this up! Takeaway: If you're new to a situation and unsure of yourself, just take that first step and go for it. You'll be fine.

Monday, Day 2: My first class of the day, How To Be A Great Tenor



I've been studying tracks from Kim Newcomb for a couple of years now with my quartet "Escapade", and to jumpstart better tenor skills under her guidance is pretty cool. In this class, Kim takes us on a journey through each of the three judging categories: Performance, Singing and Musicality. We discuss the tenor's roles in each of these areas. Using personal stories and video examples, she covers the most important things to be mindful of. Takeaway: Strive to sing with your most efficient voice—with as little airiness and as much clarity as possible. Allowing an airy sound in the notes should be an artistic choice. Efficient singing produces more overtones!

Tuesday, Day 3: Second day of Musicality Methods

Kevin Keller, our new BHS President, deserves to have a Doctorate for all the information he crams into this course. I'm correct in my thought that this is a heady class, but Kevin brings everything to the table in a clear package with visual examples and a "lab" style discussion. With volunteers forming quartets, he applies key musicality principles and transforms the basic Pole Cat I song to a performance delivered with emotion that would make the hardest heart melt into a puddle. At dinner the night before, my chorusmates asked how Kevin's class was. I gushed so much, they forgot about their other classes and joined me here, and they were glad they did. Takeaway: Every breath must have a purpose beyond "needing air". It carries emotion from phrase to phrase. The breath is the most important part of the song.

Wednesday, Day 4: Third day of HU Chorus

Eric Dalbey, music teacher, voice instructor, member of The Ambassadors of Harmony and Lead of Vocal Spectrum, is directing this gathering of voices from all over the world. His style is respectful, determined and organized. Things are really starting to come together with our two songs we'll sing at the Saturday Night Show, "A Little Street Where Old Friends Meet" and "Little Patch of Heaven". These songs are on opposite ends of the spectrum, a sweet, nostalgic ballad and a challenging but super fun uptune. We're building camaraderie for two hours each day as we color "oo" vowels and iron out bumpy consonants. Eric requests suggestions from the chorus on adding some onomatopoeia in the lyric "bees by the dozen are buzzin' real peaceful." I raise my hand and suggest shortening the vowels from dozen and buzzin' to make the words sound more like bees. He likes it. We try it. It works. Takeaway: If you have an idea, do share. It could bring a colorful addition to your group's performance!



Thursday, Day 5: Fourth day of Vocal Excellence Outside of Barbershop

At the beginning of the week, I wasn't sure what to make of this class. I learned quickly that, for an after dinner activity, this hour is a great way to cap off the day—like dessert without the carbs. For someone who loves music in (almost) all of its many forms, watching and discussing great performances is a treat. Tim Waurick shares with us some of his favorite performances from across genres. Recordings like Bobby McFerren singing Bach with his audience; Ella Fitzgerald and Mel Torme vamping together, not “doing a performance”, rather “creating a moment”; and Whitney Houston’s career-changing “I Loves You, Porgy” medley. Takeaway: In the end, vocal excellence comes down to connection.

Friday, Day 6: Fifth and final day of classes

The four “How To Be A Great (enter voice part here)” faculty combine classes into “How To Be A Great Quartet”. During this final session, Kim, Debbie Cleveland, Tyler and Ryan are coached by Joe Cerutti, Director of Leadership Engagement for BHS, as they prepare for their performance on Saturday night. Witnessing this great quartet of astoundingly talented humans accepting advice is... I don't know how to describe it... humbling, encouraging, eye-opening, and so many other “ings”. Takeaway: It doesn't matter how many gold medals they've won, the teachable champion can still grow.



Saturday, Day 7: Day of
electives and the Saturday
Night Show

I elect to take no electives!
Instead I gather some much
needed quiet time, explore the
beautiful Denver University
campus and simply enjoy the
day. I run through our HU
Chorus songs in my head, rest
my voice and share meals with
new and old friends. Do I pack?
Nah. There isn't much to sort

out. Okay, one last phone call home before I get dolled up and meet the chorus in our
practice room to run starts before the show! Let's do this! And just like that... we did! And it
was great! And I got a "good job" from the marvelous Melody Hine!



My week at Harmony University 2025 wasn't only about learning from the best, although that happened. It wasn't just about making new friends from across the globe, and having folks with medals hanging from their necks ask you if you want to sing a tag, although that happened, too. It wasn't about getting three to five hours of sleep each night due to ice cream and tagging sessions. It was more about sharing all this and more with my fellow humans (one of whom had never sung in a quartet before Thursday), growing together through our commonality, and experiencing, in depth, how truly great it is to be a barbershopper.



Where: COS Music Building
Who: High School Students
When: September 13, 2025

\$10 INCLUDES ALL-DAY COACHING BY TSV, SHEET MUSIC,
 DIGITAL LEARNING TRACKS, LUNCH, DINNER,
 T-SHIRT, & PUBLIC PERFORMANCE
 (SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE)

PRESENTED BY:

Dr. Dan Wessler




ALL DAY WORKSHOP LEARNING THREE SONGS, DIRECTED BY
 DR. DAN WESSLER, THEN PERFORMING IN THE EVENING
 SHOW. THE SEVENTH VARIETY QUARTET WILL TOP OFF THE
 EVENING WITH A COMMAND PERFORMANCE

REGISTER NOW



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.

Weekly Chapter Meetings:

Location: **Zion Lutheran Church** – 808 W Porter Avenue (Stockton, CA)

Tuesdays: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (**Grace Hall**)

VLQ: 8:00 PM – 8:30 PM (except board meeting nights)

*Rehearsals may be held at an alternate location from time to time
please double-check the details.*

See calendar for up-to-date information:

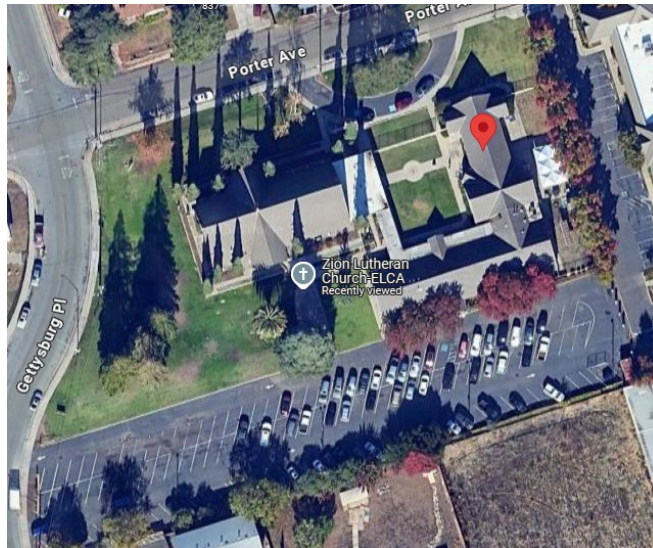
[Click here to access the Stockton Portsmen Calendar](#)

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 Road, turn north on Gettysburg Pl then turn east into Zion Lutheran Church parking lot.

Book the Stockton Portsmen or a Quartet for your Next Event!

Looking to add warmth, charm, and polished vocal harmony to your upcoming event? Whether you're planning a lively celebration or a heartfelt ceremony, the Stockton Portsmen Chorus or one of our talented quartets can provide unforgettable musical entertainment tailored to your occasion. We perform at:

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

Flexible Performance Lengths:

Our typical sets range from **20 to 40 minutes**, but we're happy to tailor the timing to suit your specific program or audience needs.

Email: Info@StocktonPortsmen.org

Phone: (209) 881-SING (7464)

Let's make your event unforgettable—**reach out today for a personalized proposal!**

****SAVE THE DATE****

2025

- **9/13** Youth Harmony Explosion (Visalia, CA) [Link for more details](#)
- **9/20** Free Show & Fundraiser for Stay Tuned Chorus (Citrus Heights, CA)
- **10/9-10/12** 2025 FWD Fall Convention (Fresno, CA) [Link to Registration](#)
- **10/24-10/26** A Cappella Harmony Camp (Pollock Pines, CA) (weekend retreat designed for high school and college-aged young men who love to sing) [Link for more details](#)
- **12/13** Stockton Portsmen Holiday Show (Stockton, CA)

2026

- **1/13-1/18** BHS Midwinter Convention (Pasadena, CA)
- **4/25** Stockton Portsmen Spring Show (TBD)

Barbershop Links:

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